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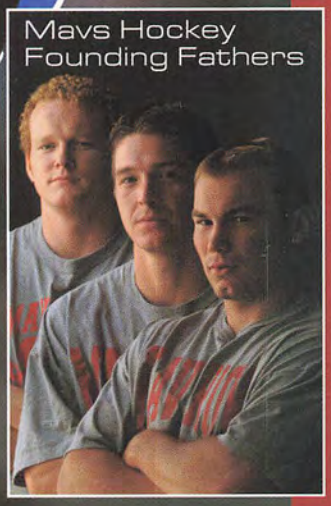

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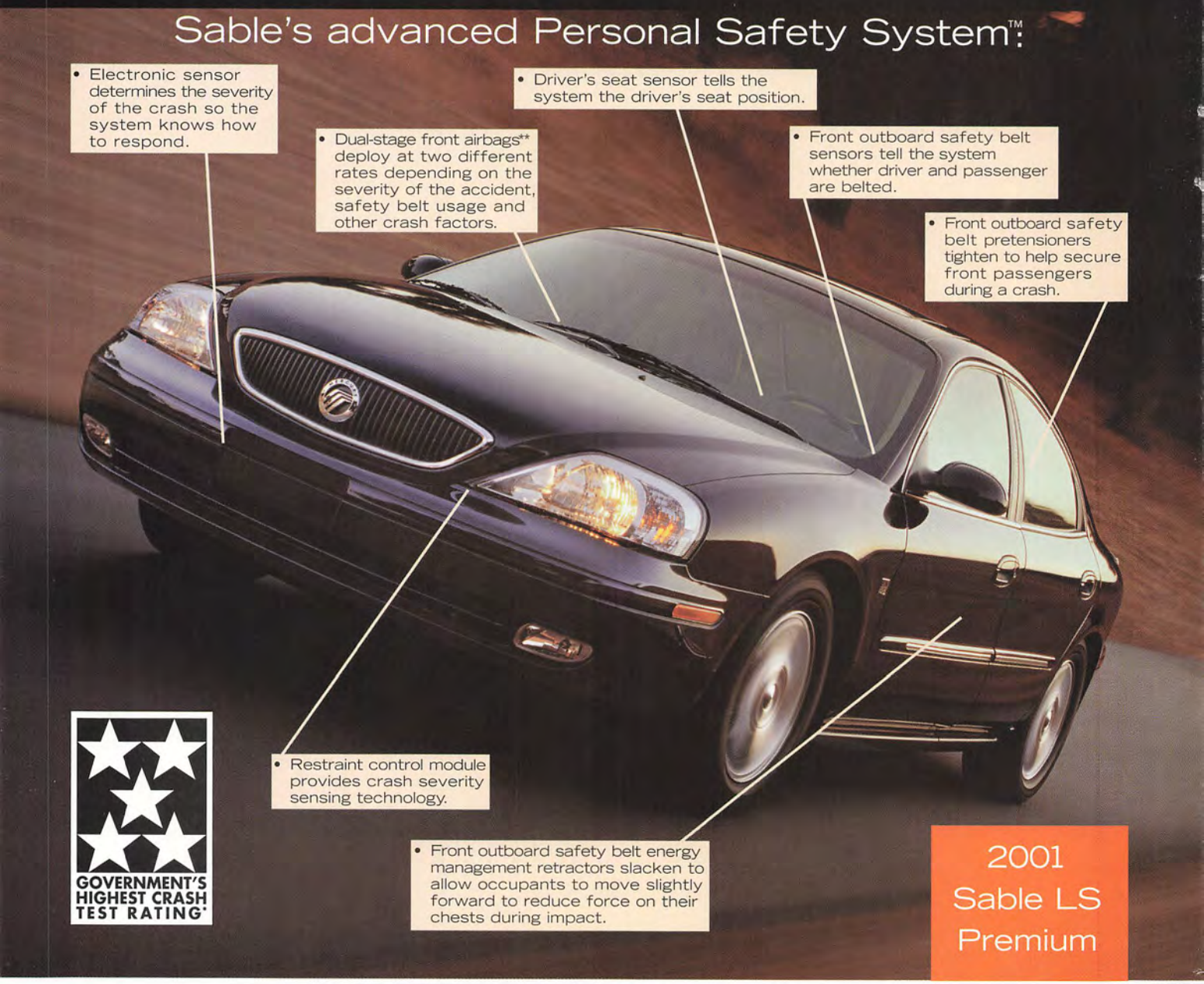
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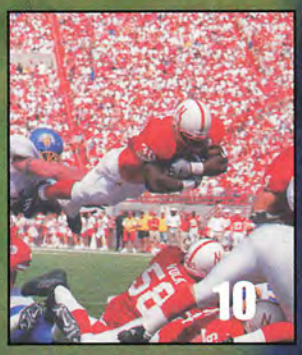

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your sports magazine

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'm not originally from Nebraska. I grew up in New England, home of the craziest sports fans in the country. Or so I thought.

My home was only 15 minutes on bike from Foxboro Stadium, about a 30-minute drive south of Boston's Fenway Park. I used to deliver the newspaper to some members of the New England Patriots. My father regularly took me to the Pawtucket Red Sox minor league games.

Before the games, I would put my baseball in a milk jug, and hang it over the dugout railing while trying to get autographs. There was a span of a couple years in the mid to late '80s, where the Celtics, Red Sox, Patriots and Bruins all went to the big championship games. Other than the Celtics winning under the leadership of Larry Bird, Boston fans were left hanging. I learned to hate the New York Yankees, the Chicago Bears and the Los Angeles Lakers.

Now, I am not even close to being a diehard Boston sports nut, but I am still a dedicated fan. Back then, I never dreamed there could be a more passionate sports community than New England.

Then I left for a Division III small college in Chicago. The school is so small that many sports bars down the street do not even know it fields a football team. Yet, it had a national championship basketball team (that won five titles) in the early '80s that was now legend within the school.

Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls ran dominant. The Chicago Cubs continued to lose, but the White Sox glimmered for a short while. The Bears never regained their glory, and I was able to gloat when the Patriots returned to the Super Bowl.

Here I was, amidst many Chicago and even Green Bay fans, rooting for my hometown Patriots… who once again lost the big game. Being in the Windy City, though, I was able to get a new appreciation for other sports towns.

Soldier Field and Wrigley Field are two classic sports stadiums, and a must see for anybody visiting the Chicago area. Though the city of Chicago is fanatical about their teams (as evidenced by the riots after the Bulls championships), I still didn't think they compared to Bostonians.

After Chicago, I headed to the University of Arizona for my graduate studies and lived in Tucson for a while afterward. Although this isn't a mecca for sports teams, it is a serious college sports town. After winning the National Championship in basketball, Wildcats fans were growing in record numbers. Their football team suddenly became ranked tops in the nation, and Tucson began to show their support. Alas, the team did not become national champions, but I had my first real taste of a big college Division I sports experience.

It was in Tucson that I met one of the owners of Nebraska Sports magazine. He was looking for some business help with a regional sports magazine. The possibility intrigued me. Here was a regional sports magazine that has high quality writing and photography, yet also includes in-depth local sports features. Here was an opportunity to grow a small business, yet still continue being closely involved with the community. To the surprise of my family and friends, I decided to move to Nebraska to work with Nebraska Sports Magazine.

So here I am, just a few weeks later – and now – I know what a REAL sports community is all about. I've met some of the most intense fans, and seen their wholehearted dedication to their college and high school teams.

The Notre Dame game was enough evidence of that. I was fortunate to have been able to go to my first Husker football game (Missouri), and had quite the personal experience. Hundreds of balloons filled up my vision as the first touchdown was scored. I was looking out at this sea of red, not only in the stadium, but in the streets and around town. This has not just been the case with college football, but for the high school sports too. Hundreds of people attended one high school game I saw. Parents were helping run the concession stand. The marching bands had huge numbers in their ranks. This was more support than my undergraduate college received for any game. Whether people were in the stands or working at the game, they were all there to support the youth.

I hope, that as the magazine continues to grow, we can do an even better job of reflecting the dedication of this unique sports community. You will see some exciting additions and changes in our magazine and web site during the coming months.

So now I'm here to stay in Nebraska and, as I have recently learned, right in the middle of THE craziest, most committed, sports fans in the country.

Rick Yngve, President

NEBRASKA SPORTS America

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Ahead of His Time

by Kevin Warneke

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

"Every day I challenge myself to get better."

Chris Gorga surprised even himself at the 1999 Nebraska State High School Class A Cross Country Championship.

"I thought I was 20th," said Gorga, a sophomore at Omaha Central High School. "I lost track of how many people were ahead of me."

Or behind him. "I've only recently started paying attention to who's behind me."

Said his coach Tim Shipman: "I was hoping he would finish in the top 15."

Actually, Gorga finished at 16:44 – a personal best and good enough for ninth place.

Gorga's finish at state, his coach said, is remarkable, considering he ran 17:30 at the Metro Conference race and finished eighth. He ran a great race at state, Shipman said.

The word's out this season, Shipman said, and Gorga should be one of the top cross-country runners in the state.

Gorga has set his goals accordingly. He hopes to whittle his times to the mid- to low-16:00s by season's e nd. And he looks to battle Kearney High's Luke Garringer and Bellevue West's Nate Wallman throughout the year. Garringer, a senior, and Wallman, a junior, were the only underclassmen to finish ahead of Gorga at state.

That race continues to impress runner and coach. Gorga has little explanation for his success. The weather cooperated, he said, and he was well-rested. Perhaps, the crowd helped spur his performance.

"There was a ton of people there," he said. "That pumped me up. During the season, nobody shows up to watch."

Shipman said his runner ran a classic race. Gorga set his pace early and kept it throughout the race. At the one-mile mark, Shipman recalled, Gorga trailed a pack of lead runners, but led another.

"I thought the second pack would swallow him up," Shipman said.

It didn't, and Gorga had his top-10 finish.

Gorga remembers three Lincoln Southeast passing him, but later catching one of the trio. That runner, Southeast's Scott Wandzilak, a junior, finished seven seconds behind Gorga.

Gorga said his racing strategy is simple: Get out as fast as he can to get away from the pack. Then, set a pace that leaves his spent at the end.

"I don't want to have anything left."

So is his approach to training: "Every day I challenge myself to get better."

Gorga, a state-qualifer in track last season in the two-mile run and two-mile relay, said he initially ran cross country to get in shape for soccer. Now, he runs track in the spring, instead of playing soccer.

Shipman said Gorga, an honor student, is more than just a solid runner. "He's a top-notch kid." nsa

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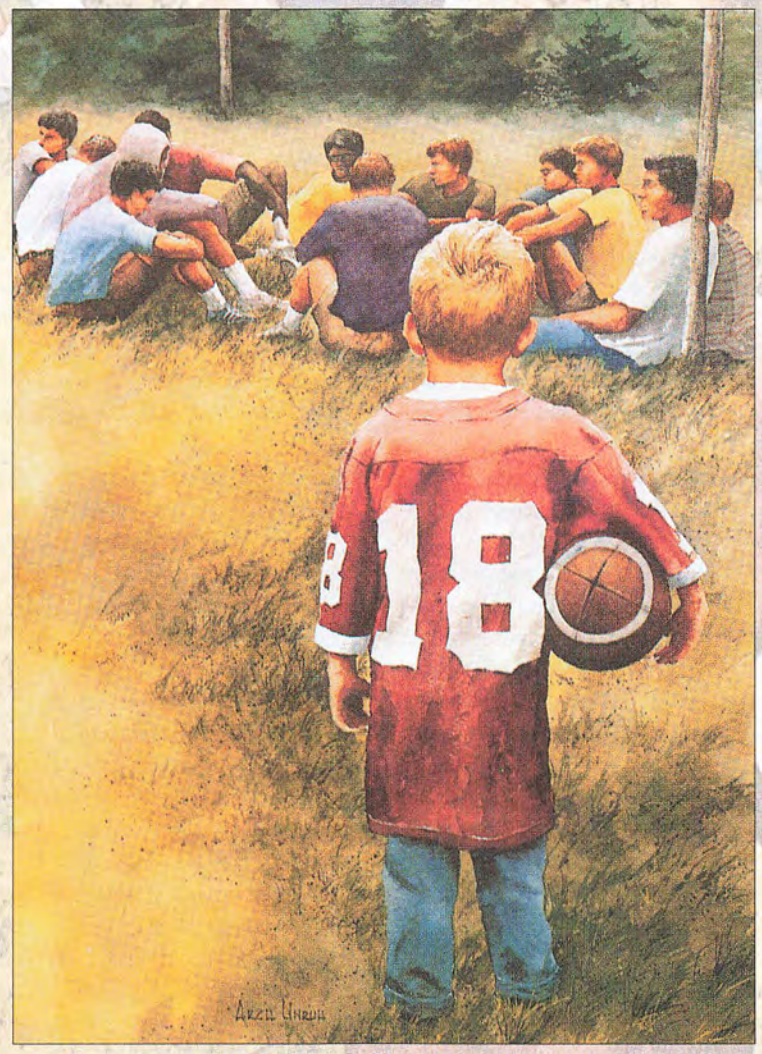

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Between the lines

BY JOHN KNICELY

Deep Thought

Terry Pettit is still a deep thinker but the issues have changed.

This is his first season away from coaching the volleyball program that he built into a national power at Nebraska and Pettit tells me "it's the first time in 23 years that I haven't gone to sleep at night thinking about the next match."

His focus now is to help the other Nebraska coaches who are consumed with the same competitive thoughts at bedtime.

Several years ago Pettit opened discussions with UNL Athletic Director Bill Byrne about the idea of creating a position on the administrative staff designed to function an advocate for coaches. Athletes are well cared for in terms of support services and Pettit says his experience is that the needs of coaches can be better attended.

With Byrne's approval, Pettit wrote his own job description and now carries the title Director of Coaching Enhancement.

He assumed that role last December when he retired from coaching and Pettit says he is certain "it was the right decision."

A typical workday might include a morning visit to a coach's office, a round table discussion at lunch with coaches from five other sports, and an afternoon observing practice at yet another venue on campus.

Whatever the activity, Pettit watches with a critical eye and is quick to listen but slow to speak. He has found that coaches often learn by "thinking out loud to themselves."

His goal is then to "enhance" that thinking by shifting the coaching paradigm. Pettit maintains that after several years in the profession, the quest of a coach for personal improvement often stalls because repetitive ideas come from within the same circle.

Pettit tries to broaden those horizons by using his Liberal Arts education. Consequently, some Nebraska coaches now read from a suggested study list that includes works in mythology, neurology and marketing.

It may seem like a stretch and Pettit says that's the point. He always encouraged his players to "take a risk" and he's challenging coaches to do the same.

And Pettit points out that Athletic Director Byrne is also staying ahead of the curve in the process. Pettit says to his knowledge, Nebraska is the only program in the country that addresses the needs of coaches with a full time staff member.

It's an example of what Pettit tries to convey to other coaches: "to be the first of the new instead of the last of the old."

For all of this to happen, Pettit had to identify a successor who could not only maintain the volleyball program at Nebraska but move it forward as a national power.

Former assistant John Cook was the perfect match with his head coaching success at Wisconsin where he modeled the Nebraska program. Pettit also points out that "Cook understands the Midwest culture and embraces it."

Had that smooth transition not been possible, Pettit says he could have continued as head coach for another five years but perhaps without the same drive. His desire was to "use other creative muscles" and he's pleased to have such a unique opportunity to do so.

But what about the program with the most muscle at Nebraska? Frank Solich has yet to supplement his game plan with a study in Greek Mythology but he has visited with Pettit about coaching. Both have experienced the difficulty and joy of winning a national championship.

Pettit refers to the football program as the "enabler" for the other sports at Nebraska. It already has the necessary resources to help the coaching staff sustain the standard of excellence that has been associated with the program for the last thirty years.

The success of Nebraska football is a study that Pettit incorporates as he supplements the work of other coaches.

And his own 23-year record of success gives him the credibility that is needed to gain the trust of another coach in a mentoring relationship.

Pettit has plenty to offer and next spring he will evaluate his performance as Nebraska's Director of Coaching Enhancement and decide if the position should be continued.

He will also continue to enjoy some of the activities he missed during his twenty-three year obsession with volleyball. In all those years he had attended only one Nebraska football game. This year he had the chance to take his Dad to see the Huskers play at Notre Dame. His schedule permits the luxury of attending performances at the Lied Center.

Pettit also has more time to think and to delve even further into his continuing study of "history, art, poetry and war," which of course may benefit the rest of the coaches at Nebraska.

Will we see visible signs of his influence? Probably not, but if you ever notice Herbie Husker striking the pose of Rodin's "The Thinker" on the sidelines, you'll have a good idea of who Herbie has been talking to. nsa

John Knicely is news co-anchor at WOWT-TV (Channel 6) in Omaha.

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3. Which Husker is the only player in school history to win the outland trophy in two consecutive seasons?
4. Which Husker had 15 Quarterback sacks in 1993 to establish an NU Record?
5. Which Husker scored the winning touchdown in the 1971 Orange Bowl victory to win the National Championship?
6. Tom Osborne once played for the 49'ers. What other professional football team did he play for? (Hint: He may be heading back to this city soon)
7. What 3 players were known as "The Triplets"?

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BIKE MASTERS PRESENTS

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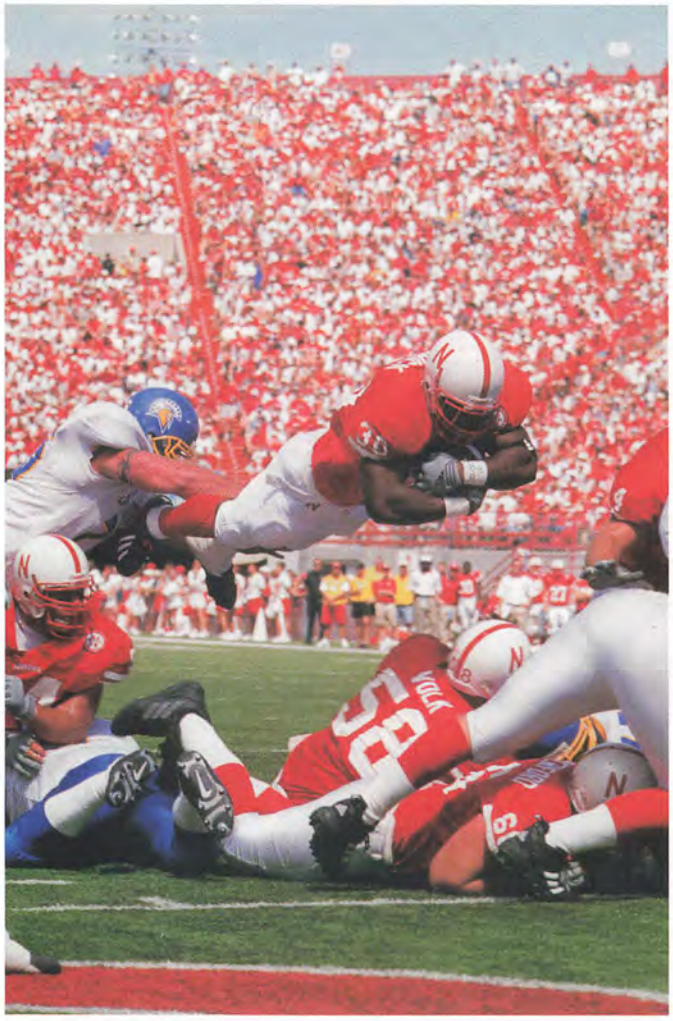
Story by Chuck Green Photos by Eric Francis



It was one of the least-significant plays of the 2000 season, but one Nebraska's Jason Schwab will remember for a long time.

A simple pitch sweep to Cornhusker I-back Dan Alexander around the left side of the line, good for an eight-yard gain.

It was the first offensive play against San Jose State — the top-ranked Huskers' season-opener — and the first down Schwab has played since the 1998 season.

"It was pretty exciting," Schwab said after the game, with a smile. "It's something I've waited for for a long time. A long time . . . "

Last season, Schwab, a 6-foot-1, 300-pound senior offensive tackle from Eagan, Minn., tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during two-a-day practices, knocking him out of what he thought would be his last season of college football.

"Missing last season was one of the toughest things I've ever had to deal with," Schwab said. "It was hard standing on the sidelines, thinking I might have played my last game."

But Schwab's career was extended last spring when the NCAA granted him a sixth year of eligibility. And he has no plans of squandering his second chance.

"I've been given a second chance at my senior year, and it's not something I'm taking lightly," he said. "I figure I have to make the most of it."

Schwab has emerged as the emotional leader on Nebraska's offensive line — a group many think could be among the best in the country this season and one of the

"To me, winning isn't just the most important thing, it's the only thing," he said. "This entire team has the goal of going undefeated this season and playing for a national championship, and that's our first priority. If we do that, individual honors of one kind or another might come. "But that's not our main concern." **Offensive Guard, Russ Hochstein**

best ever at Nebraska.

In the 49-13 season-opening win against San Jose State, the Huskers rolled up 596 yards of total offense – 505 on the ground – behind Schwab and his linemates. It was the first time since the 1996 Fiesta Bowl win over Florida that Nebraska's offense had generated more than 500 yards rushing. The Huskers punted only once in the game – in the fourth quarter.

Against the Spartans, Nebraska stuck to the basics, gaining two-thirds of its rushing yardage between the tackles. Alexander led all rushers with 208 yardes and two touchdowns, while second-string I-back Correll Buckhalter added another 117 yards.

"It was smash-mouth right from the beginning," Schwab said of the first game. "I think we ran three or four plays the whole game, and they couldn't stop us. If they can't stop it, why run something else?"

The next week, against Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., the Huskers found themselves in a dogfight, playing before a hostile crowd in a stadium where a visiting No. 1-ranked team hadn't won since 1968.

But again, the offensive line came through.

Alexander again led the Husker ground assault, rolling up 112 yards on 24 carries, including a key 28-yard touchdown run midway through the third quarter that put Nebraska ahead 21-7.

Nebraska gained 274 yards on the ground and 377 yards of total offense in the 27-24 overtime win against the No. 23-ranked Fighting Irish.

The offensive line's ability was evident in the overtime period. After Nebraska's defense held Notre Dame to a field goal in its overtime possession, the Huskers found themselves in a third-and-nine situation. As Nebraska quarterback Eric Crouch dropped back to pass, he found himself with ample time to scan the field to find an open receiver. He found tight end Tracey Wistrom sneaking between two linebackers, and fired a nine-yard strike to give the Huskers a fresh set of downs at the 15-yard line.

On the next play, the Husker offensive line opened a hole for Alexander, who responded with an 8-yard carry to the 7. On the next play, Crouch scooted around the left end and into the corner of the end zone for the game-winning score.

If the first two games are any indication, the Husker offensive line appears to have returned to "Nebraska form."

"We've certainly done well early," said Nebraska offensive line coach Milt Tenopir. "If we continue to improve, this bunch could be something special."

Tenopir should know. In his 26 years as a Husker assistant prior to this season, he has coached 46 all-conference players, 18 All-Americans, six winners of the Outland Trophy (awarded annually to the nation's best college interior lineman), two winners of the Lombardi Award (given to the nation's best lineman) and has sent 22 players to the pros.

Next to Schwab on the right side of Nebraska's offensive line is guard Russ Hochstein, a 6-foot-4, 290-pound senior from Hartington who earned first-team All-Big 12 honors last season, and is in the running for All-American honors this season – and some other hardware, including the Outland Trophy.

The other five Huskers to win the Outland were center

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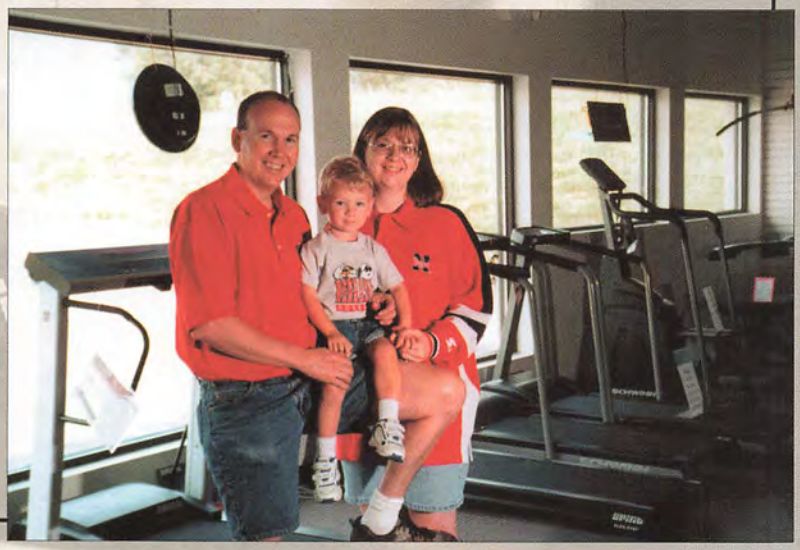

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Dave Rimington (1981, 1982), guard Dean Steinkuhler (1983), guard Will Shields (1992), tackle Zach Wiegert (1994) and guard Aaron Taylor (1997).

Hochstein, however, isn't concerned about personal honors.

"To me, winning isn't just the most important thing, it's the only thing," he said. "This entire team has the goal of going undefeated this season and playing for a national championship, and that's our first priority. If we do that, individual honors of one kind or another might come.

"But that's not our main concern."

Hochstein's chances of winning the Outland this season might come down to whether he can beat out teammate Dominic Raiola for the honor. A junior, Raiola also is considered a top contender for the Outland and All-America honors.

Raiola, a 6-2, 300-pound player from Honolulu, said he was pleased with the way Nebraska's offensive line began its season.

"We pretty much had our way with them," Raiola said of the win against San Jose State. "We were trying for 350 or more (yards), but when you see the numbers going up like that you just don't want to stop.

"When we saw them on their knees that us made us stronger."

San Jose State Coach Dave Baldwin also was impressed with Nebraska's offensive performance.

"That offensive unit is very, very dominant," he said. "We couldn't stop them. I think we stopped them two or three times all game.

"I can't measure our defense when you are playing against Raiola and the offensive this team produced against us."

The left side of the line is anchored by tackle Dave Volk , a 6-5, 310-pound senior and Toniu Fonoti, a 6-4, 330 sophomore guard who saw extensive playing time last season as a true freshman.

Despite the early season offensive accomplishments, improvements can be made among the offensive linemen, Hochstein said.

"We still have room for improvement," he said. "We made some mistakes — I know I made some — but for the opening game, it was a pretty solid game for us."

Raiola agreed.

"There's still a little touching up that we can do to get better. We had missed assignments here or there that we can do better with. Overall, though, I thought we did well for the first game."

Against San Jose State, Nebraska's backups also cleaned up, Schwab said.

"That was great to see how they came out and started moving guys back as well," he said. "That gives us some confidence in them, because we need some guys to step up and give us a number two line. We like to roll two lines in and out of there all the time, and we're off to a good start."

Jon Rutherford, Nate Kolterman and Chris Loos are just three of Nebraska's backups on the offensive line, and are important to continued offensive line success. But they will have to wait their turn, as have hundreds of their predecessors, for starts and recognition.

"We need to keep getting the younger guys more reps," Hochstein said. "Most of them did really well. We have a lot of aggressive guys coming up."

With the season in full-swing, Hochstein said, the goal of the offensive linemen is to ensure success for the Husker backfield.

"We always want to have big rushing games," he said. "It's always in the back of our minds, no matter who we play, to go out and have 400 or 500 yards and show what we can do.

"We told ourselves that if we were going to be a good line, we were going to have to run the ball all day, in any situation. We very proud of the fact that we have an experienced group up front. We've been around for a while and we shouldn't be surprised by anything we get."

Raiola said anything short of an undefeated season would be a disappointment.

"We want to be a dominating team this year that this was just the first step," he said. "We can't be greedy yet, because we have the whole season in front of us.

"But we don't plan on letting up a bit." nsa

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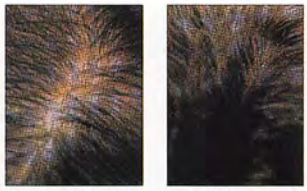

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CHALK TALK

THE POWER OPTION

One of the main goals of Chalk Talk is to prove that football is not just a game of dumb luck. Offensive coordinators often call plays, not necessarily to gain big yardage,but to see how the defense will react. In this edition of Chalk Talk, we show how the Huskers run the QB-Power Option from the Maryland "I" formation. Then, we will take the play one step further and use the option motion to set up the deep pass. This is the kind of play that makes Husker tight ends such as Tracey Wistrom, Aaron Golliday and Jon Bowling drool with anticipation. And for good reason: if the play is run right they'll usually find themselves wide open behind the defense.

FORMATION

The Maryland I has become a common feature of the Husker offense. Usually consisting of a wingback inserted in between the I-back and fullback, the Maryland I puts three backs in the backfield, much like the wishbone, but lines them up along the center of the formation, like the I.

Occasionally, the offense can also throw in an extra fullback (to gain more power and blocking) or an extra I-back (to present a threat to both corners) in place of the the wingback as the middleman in the formation.

PLAY OVERVIEW

(Run) Every coach at some point in his career has a play that will inevitably define him, good or bad. Although it is still early in his career, Husker Coach Frank Solich's play just might be the first touchdown that Nebraska scored against Texas in last seasons Big 12 Championship game.

Facing a fourth-and-one on the Texas 30-yard line, Solich called for a Quarterback (QB) Power Blast where Husker QB Eric Crouch fakes a handoff to the fullback and follows the lead block of the I-Back (IB) to the outside and around the defense. The play resulted in a Crouch touchdown and helped to lead the Huskers to 22-0 advantage on the Longhorns.

This play, the Maryland I-QB Power Option, takes the same principle into account, but changes the formation so that the QB has the opportunity to option to a pitch man. The play sets the defense up in the middle of the field so the QB has one of two options: keep or pitch. The keep part of the play is based off of the QB-Power run that was first used during Tom Osborne's last season as head coach. This plays creates a chance for the QB to follow two lead blockers through the hole and still have a pitch man with the deep back.

(Pass) The second diagram is a carbon copy of the QB-Power Option up until the point where the QB releases from his option motion and drops back to pass. There is max-protection for the QB; in other words, there are only a couple of receivers on the play so that the QB has enough time in the backfield to allow for the play to develop. This is a play that is meant to be a game-breaker, so the offense needs to give the QB time to let the primary receiver (backside TE) slip behind the defense.

ASSIGNMENTS

(Run) We'll start off with discussing the backfield assignments of the play.

First, the QB is going to fake a handoff to the first of the two fullbacks, who crashes into the line of scrimmage, faking a trap or dive through the hole. This will do one of two things: It will create a diversion where the defense will tackle the fullback and leave the QB alone or the fullback will run through the hole and block the first player he sees to the opposite side of the play (In the diagram above he blocks the MLB).

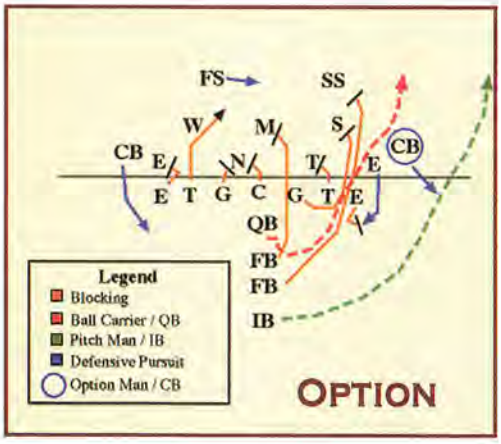
The second fullback will be used as the lead blocker for the QB to follow.

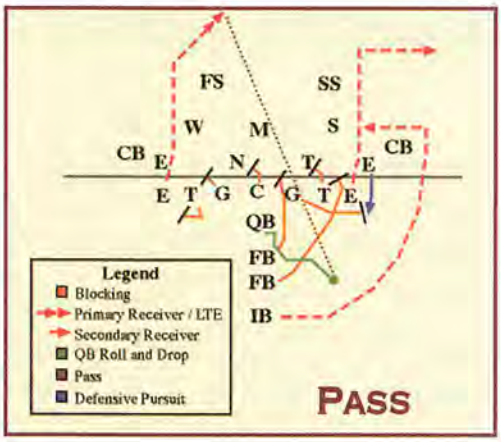
Think of him basically as the sole fullback in the regular I-formation and think then of the QB as the IB running a blast. The QB will follow the second FB through playside tackle/tight end hole thus representing the QB Power portion of the play. The option side of the play occurs when the IB, or deep back of the formation, takes an outside angle on the play while keeping a pitch relationship with the QB. This wide angle will actually take the IB to the outside and around the defensive end who the playside tight end will be shielding to the outside. The QB will run underneath the D-End and run to the sideline.

It will be here where the QB will be forced to make the choice of keeping or pitching the ball. With a lead blocker in front, the QB will read what the outside defender (in the diagram, we have the CB as the outside man) does.

If the defender closes in, the QB will pitch the ball to a wide-open IB. If the CB plays the option man, then the QB keeps the ball and is headed for the outside.

As for the line play, it is imperative that there is no penetration into the backfield. Any penetration from the defense will create problems with the timing in the backfield and also could make it difficult for the backs to get to their spots. In the diagram, we have the defense set up in a 4-3 with the playside tackle blocking down on the defensive tackle and the playside guard pulling around to the outside. In the case of an eagle defense or 5-man front, which is possible because of the offensive formation, both playside lineman would block down. The center and backside guard would combo down on the Nose Tackle and whoever





else comes so that there is no backside pursuit on the play. Because the QB has to make a fake in the backfield and wait for the second FB to lead through the hole, this backside protection is of the utmost importance to a successful play.

(Pass) The backfield motion of the two FB's and the IB are identical in each play. The difference between the two plays obviously comes with the QB either running an option or dropping back to pass. The key to the drop is to make his fake to the first FB and follow the second FB with the IB trailing.

As the QB gets behind the playside G-T gap, he will make a 45 degree angle drop and end up between 6 to 8 yards deep behind the T-TE gap. Here he is able to view the field, be deep enough to see over his lineman, and still have the defense playing catch-up on what they think is a run outside. If the safety bites (which usually seems to happen) and the tight end gets behind him, it's smooth sailing the rest of the way. Just ask California last year after Wistrom went 70 yards on its defense.

The line motion is the same of the option run play except for they need to realize that they are not allowed to go downfield. This is a pass, and because of that, they obviously need to pass protect and stay on their side of the line of scrimmage. In the diagram, we have the playside G pulling around the playside T and kicking out the defensive end. This is an important angle to take on a very important block. If you can push the DE out, then the QB will have not only more time to throw, but also a lane to run if the play is covered.

After that, backside protection is obviously important. Even so, the primary receiver is to the backside of the QB, which should at least allow him the opportunity to see behind him as he is searching for his receiver. If someone is coming from the backside, hopefully this will give the QB a chance not to get clobbered.

Finally, the routes run by the two tight ends are meant to be easy reads for the QB that will cause the defense to separate to cover both. Husker coaches realize that most defenses, especially the ones playing an option-heavy team like Nebraska, are going to sell out to stop what appears to be a run. If they do happen to have someone paying attention and playing deep, then splitting up your receivers will force the defender to make a decision.

Here we have the backside TE (primary receiver) run a deep post to the center of the field. If the safety is playing heads up, he will cover this man deep. The playside TE will be running a medium range out route, 10 yards or so. If the QB sees the FS come up on him, then there will be nobody left behind to cover the primary route-runner. In other words, touchdown!!!

Last but not least, we have shown in the diagram the IB cutting off his option relationship with the QB and going on a short route across the middle against the flow of the defense. If it is necessary, you may want to have your IB stay back and block, but if you are able to get him into the short middle or the flat area, then you give your QB one more option to throw to.

Play Opportunities

(Run) Because the defense is scrunched into the middle of the field, this allows for the offense to be able to trap and shield them inside the box creating a line to the outside. No matter how many men the defense has in the box, this is the perfect play to run to the outside of the field. In fact, the more the middle is stacked up with defenders, the better.

(Pass) To put it simply, this play is meant to score every time you run it. It is set up through continued use of the option football out of multiple formations. Give the defense every look at the option. Give the defense every blocking scheme you have running the option. Help set up your receivers running their routes by having them be very aggressive early on in the game with their downfield blocking. This isnt' really a play that sets other plays up – it IS the play that gets set up. Sure, having this in the arsenal keeps the opponent honest on the option, but it works best when you run the option good enough to make the defense cheat.

Defense

(Run) PENETRATION!!! One negative of the play for the offense is the amount of time that it takes for the play to develop. In a game of chess between the offensive and defensive coordinators, an all-out blitz or some tricky stunting by the defense could blow up this play before it ever has a chance to do any damage. Other than that, you need to have your linebackers and secondary players work on getting off of the downfield blocks in practice. If they can not do that, especially against a team like Nebraska, then you will be reading the names of the QB and IB on their jerseys quite a bit.

(Pass) This play puts a stress on any FS, good or bad. The defense can help make it easier on him by defending the option well – if he doesn't have to play run support every time an option is run, he will be less likely to bite on this fake. Some methods of doing this include substituting frequently and (if possible) getting penetration into the backfield. This will keep the front seven fresh and not allow the QB a good opportunity to locate his receivers.

Call them UNO hockey's *founding fathers*

by Kevin Warneke

Four years ago, they committed to a hockey program that still was a gleam in school officials' eyes. UNO had a place to play and thousands of fans who wanted to watch.

But the university had no tradition; no history of competing at the NCAA Division I level. Coach Mike Kemp preached a message of promise, glory and, yes, victories. But it was only a message.

But Jason White believed, and is glad he did. "It's a great feeling to know you helped start UNO hockey."

So did Jason Cupp, James Chalmers and the others. They came from such places as Thunder Bay, Ontario; Grand Forks, N.D.; and Edina, Minn.

They came to play collegiate hockey for a university known more for being the sister institution of a football powerhouse. They came because of the promise of competitive hockey before sellout crowds.

And they stayed. Through the losses – and there were quite a few.

This year's Maverick hockey squad features 11 seniors, including nine who signed as freshmen for UNO's inaugural hockey season. They expect the 2000-2001 season to be the best yet – but not the best ever for UNO. Big things lie ahead, as White promised.

Chalmers talks about a national championship run this year, and he isn't kidding. White contends that Mavericks were on the brink of being nationally ranked last season after they advanced all the way to the Central Collegiate Hockey Association finals. A few more wins, he said, and ...

Kemp said his 2000-2001 seniors deserve credit for helping the UNO hockey program get established. "We have a way of doing things here now. The seniors were the ones who help established that tradition."

That journey began on Oct. 17, 1997, when the Mavericks hosted the University of Manitoba. UNO fans waited until 9:51 of the second period until Chalmers scored the first goal in school history.

"When James got the goal, it took the pressure off the whole bench," Cupp said, who would later score UNO's second goal. "We were just waiting to see who was going to do it."

The university raffled his stick and the puck, but Chalmers has something better to remember the moment. "It will always be in my heart." That's his to keep.

The Mavericks lost that night, but nine days later – after a blizzard dumped nearly two feet of snow in the Colorado Springs area – UNO defeated Air Force 6-1.

That inaugural season includes two other memorable moments. In November, the Mavs completed its first home sweep – with 6-3 and 7-5 victories over Denver University. In February, the Mavs lost 11-0 to Maine, but rebounded to defeat the Black Bears 4-3 the next night.

The second season, at the beginning, proved to be trying. The Mavericks started the season 2-17. "After our initially success, people expected us to come out of the blocks better than we did."

The Mavericks finished the season 11-24 after winning five of their last six games.

Which brings this chronology to recent history. The 1999-2000 regular season had its share of moments, but the postseason was something else.

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Photos by Eric Francis

UNO's win over Miami on Feb. 18 clinched a spot in the CCHA playoffs. Northern Michigan fell first, then Bowling Green.

Against mighty Michigan in the semi-finals, the Mavericks made the collegiate hockey world take notice. The Wolverines fell 7-4.

Cupp said the 1999-2000 season was memorable, but wasn't enough. "We did have some success last year, but we didn't really win anything. We didn't get any hardware or make it to the (NCAA) tournament. We still have that to accomplish."

Chalmers puts a different spin on last season. "I think we earned it (respect) last year. Now we have to back it up and prove it wasn't a fluke."

And hockey at UNO is only going to get better, White said. "This program – in three or four years, no maybe two, three years – is going to be the No. 1 program in the nation. You're going to have kids from all over North America that want to go to UNO. They'll be turning down the Michigans, the Michigan States and say 'No no. I want to go to UNO.'"

Here is a summary of UNO's 11 seniors and Kemp's comments about each:

Allan Carr, a 5-8, 165-pound forward. Carr, who played in all 42 games last season, finished second in scoring, with 11 goals and 20 assists. "A very crafty, clever centerman. Will make a huge contribution."

Ed Cassin, a 5-10, 195-pound defenseman who played previously for the Lincoln Stars. His two goals and nine assists last season all came during CCHA competition. "It's unfortunate that he only has two years of eligibility since his transfer from Hamilton. Made big contributions last year as a first-year Division I player. There is high expectation for him this year as well."

James Chalmers, a 6-2, 200-pound forward. Chalmers recorded three goals and two assists in UNO's three-game conference playoff series at Northern Michigan. He scored the game-winning goal in the upset win against Michigan in the CCHA semifinals. "Suffered through much of the early part of last year. My expectations for him this year is that he'll have a tremendous season."

Jason Cupp, a 6-0, 180-pound forward. Cupp had six multiple-point games last season. He finished with five goals and 22 assists. "Will be an outstanding leader. Voted captain by his teammates. Should do a marvelous job leading the team this year."

Josh Lampman, a 6-0, 195-pound defenseman. Lampman played in UNO's first two games last season, then suffered a injury while picking up his stick during practice the following week. "Has really had to play through a tremendous amount of adversity. Has been finally rewarded with a sixth year of eligibility. I expect great things out of him as he has been given one more reprieve."

Dave Noel-Bernier, a 5-10, 190-pound forward. Noel-Bernier had three goals and an assist in a weekend series against Ferris State to earn CCHA Player of the Week honors. "Extremely committed. Leads by example. Has been consistenly excellent since the time he started his college career."

Billy Pugliese, a 5-10, 205-pound forward. Six of Pugliese's 10 points last season came on Maverick power plays. "Has shown tremendous commitment this past offseason. Has had the most remarkable turn-around of a college athlete that I've been around in 25 years of coaching."

John Rosso, a 6-0, 190-pound defenseman. Rosso had a goal and two assists in each of the past two seasons. "Very steady, stay-at-home kind of guy. Plays a very simple game. Very tough."

Jason White, a 5-9, 185-pound forward. White led UNO during the 1998-99 season with 11 goals and 16 assists. He finished with seven goals and 13 assists last season. "Very committed. Very quick. Has set high goals for himself, and I expect him to fulfill those."

Joe Yurecko, a 6-4, 240-pound defenseman. Yurecko recorded two assists in 20 games last season. He scored two goals in each of the previous seasons for UNO. "First player that I've experienced to be a 'most improved player' twice in a career."

Dan Zaluski, a 5-9, 180-pound defenseman. A transfer from Michigan State, Zaluski appeared in 10 games last season. He recorded two assists. "Have been waiting for him to step forward and contribute in a consistent manner." nsa

He's Still Standing

He might not be the biggest on the ice, but Bryce Lampman won't allow himself to be outworked

by Tony C. Dreibus

Growing up, Bryce Lampman would get knocked around by the bigger kids on the ice, including his older brother, Josh, now a senior defenseman for the UNO Maverick hockey team.

Getting roughed up has given Bryce, now a 6-foot-1, 200-pound defenseman for the Lancers, motivation to get to the gym and has helped him develop a strong work ethic.

"I never want to be outworked," he said. "I always think there's someone working harder than me. That keeps me focused on what I want to do and what kind of player I want to be. Sometimes I want to take the day off, but then I think that maybe some other player on some other team might be working harder, and that can beat us in the long run."

His team goal this year is a championship for the Lancers. "I feel we're going to make run," he said. "We have strong points all around and I think we can match any team in talent. We're not real big but hopefully the size of our hearts will take care of that."

Heart is important in any sport, but having a pure love of hockey and great knowledge of the game only helps Lampman, Coach Mike Hastings said.

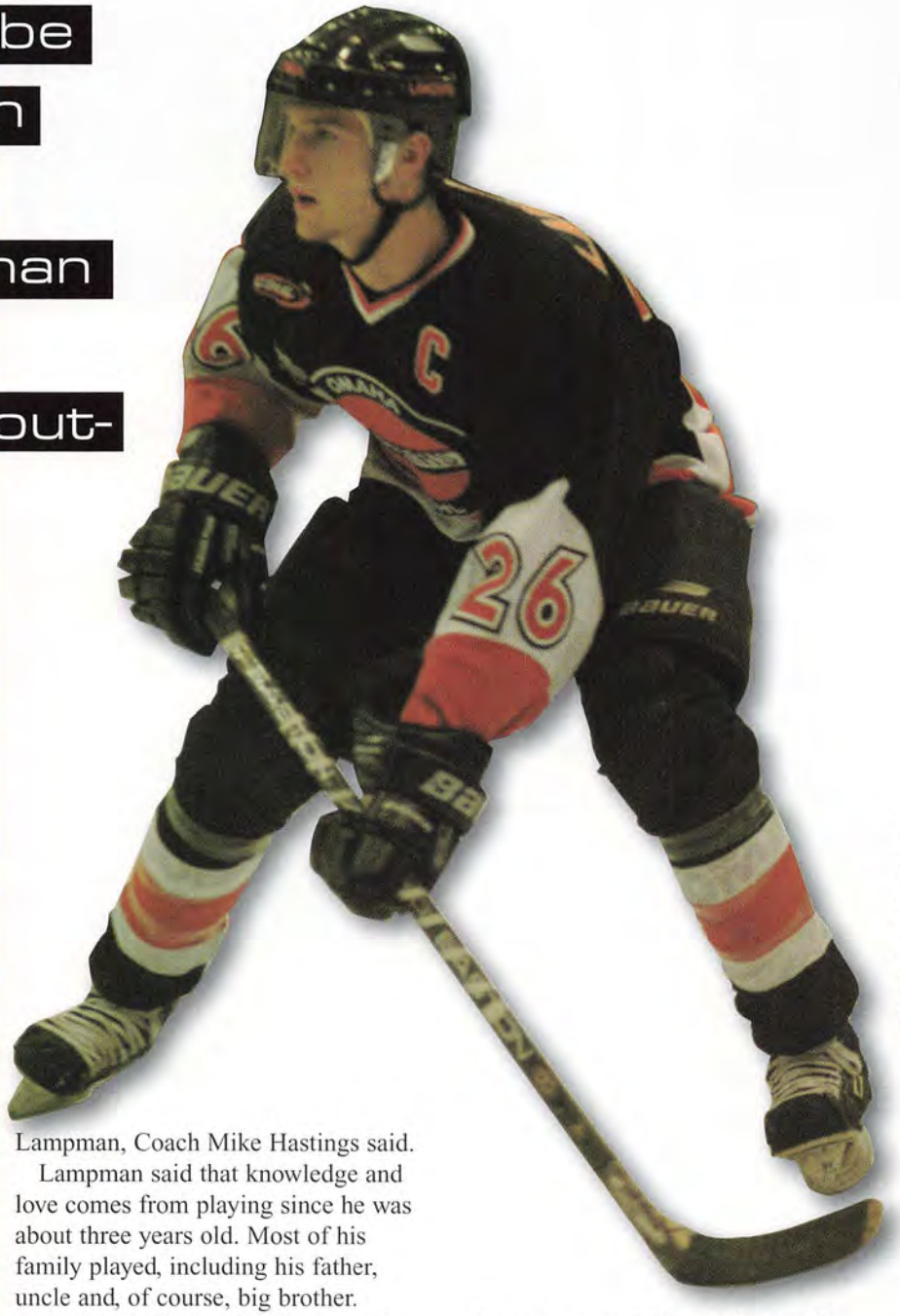


Photo by Eric Francis

Lampman said that knowledge and love comes from playing since he was about three years old. Most of his family played, including his father, uncle and, of course, big brother.

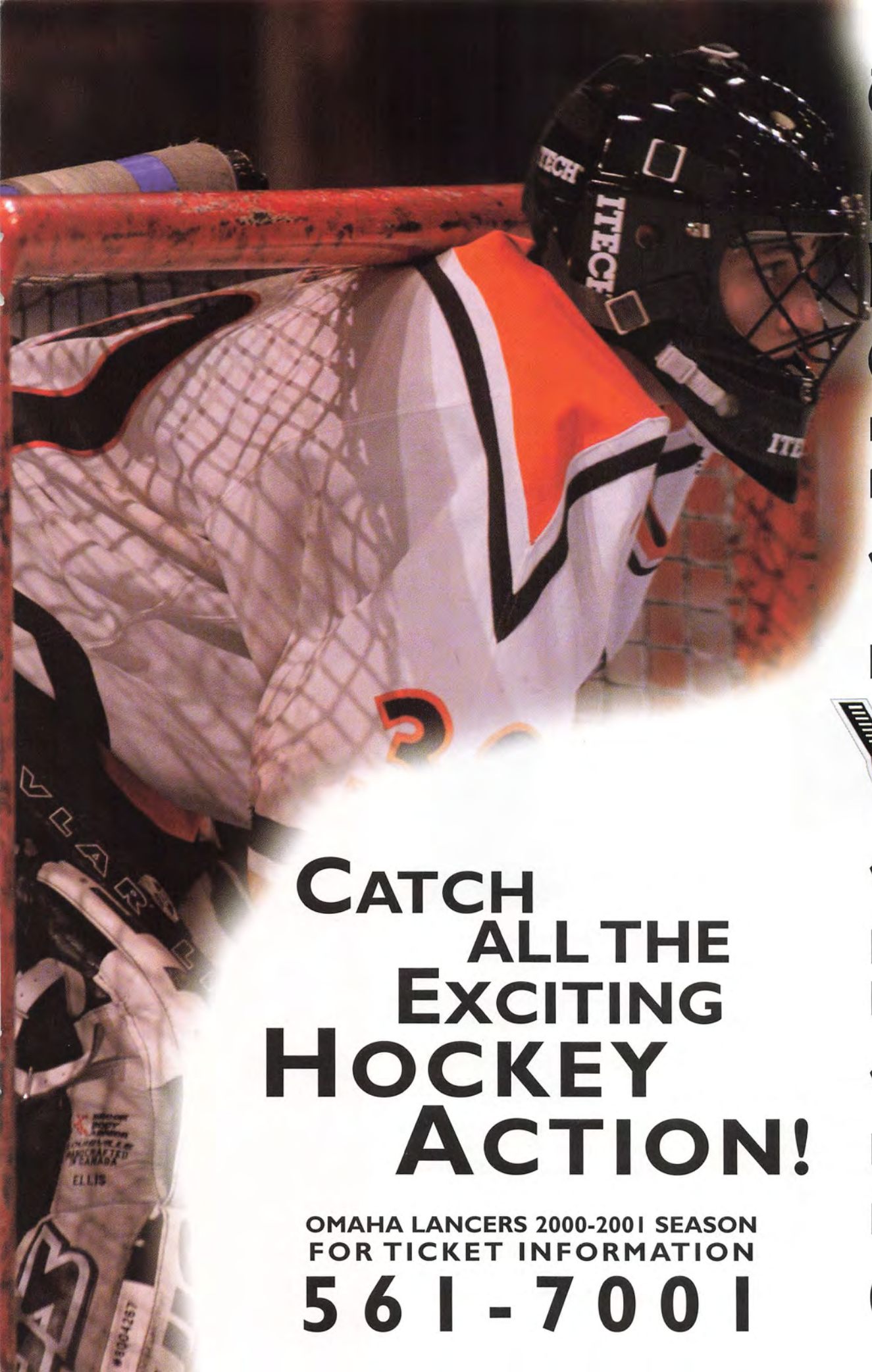
Hastings said that the 18-year-old has developed both physically and mentally since joining the team in April.

"Bryce came in as a high school junior after the team had been together since September, so he was put into a difficult situation," he said. "But to see the progress that he's made since he joined the team, we couldn't ask for more."

Lampman's maturity is another asset, Hastings said, that will make a positive difference for the team.

"His maturity level is beyond his years," he said. "I think Bryce will make a difference."

As for Lampman, he wants what every young hockey player wants, to



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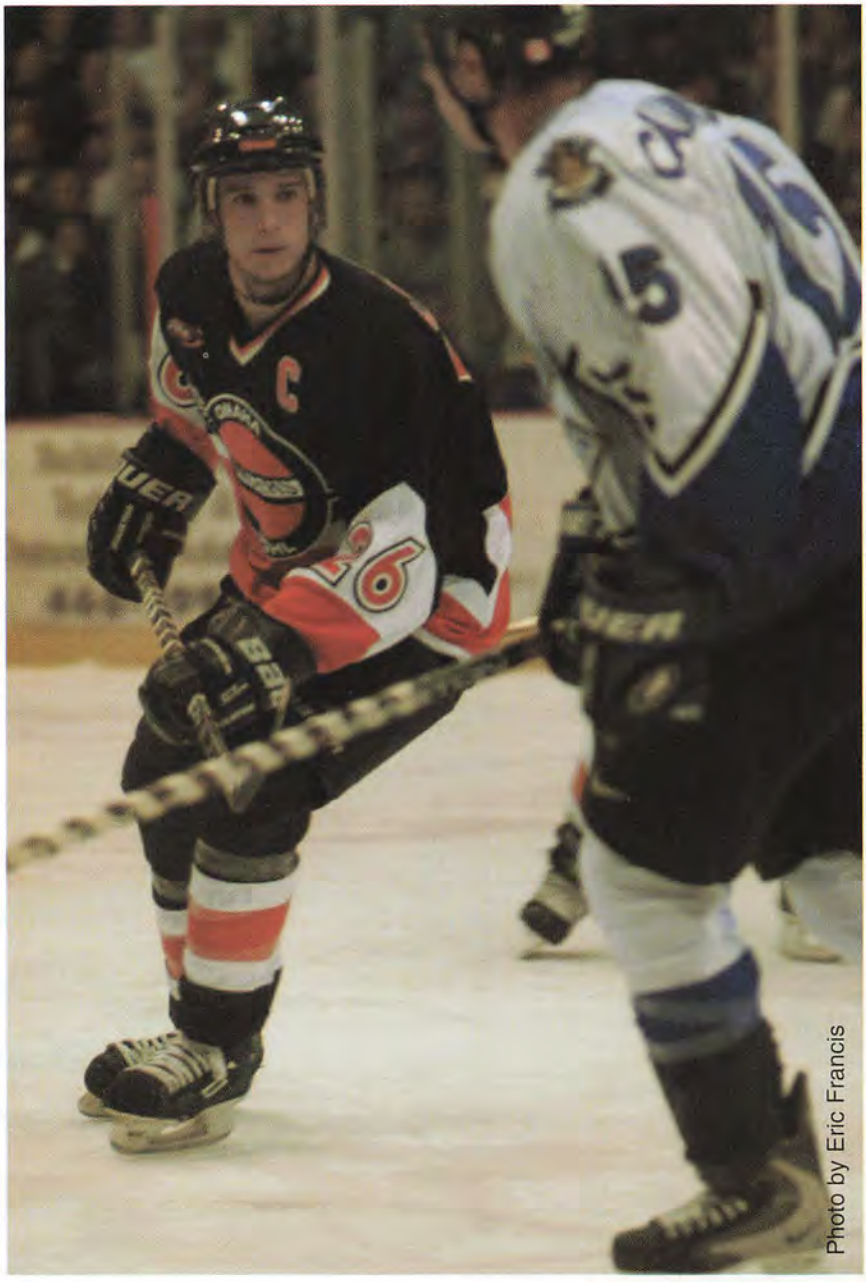

Photo by Eric Francis

play in the NHL.

While that's not a reality for most, Lampman definitely has a shot, Hastings said.

"I think Bryce has the potential to play beyond even his college years," he said. "He's tough, he's physical and he's intelligent."

Hastings said he hopes Lampman will use these assets to help the Lancers, who are showing promise early, to a championship this year.

"I know what's expected of our team in Omaha," he said. "I think in our league, if one tries to read too much too early, he's going to be surprised, but I like our skill level. One of our strengths is at the blue line. With the guys we have up front, we have the potential to be good."

With the loss of Dan Ellis, who plays for UNO this year, who will be minding the net is a question that is yet to be unanswered, Hastings said. He has no doubt that newcomers Steven Murphy or Marty Magers will step up between the pipes.

"A year ago, prior to Danny becoming the starter, we were asking the same questions," he said. "We won't know who's going to step up until they get the opportunity to excel or fail."

The USHL, which had more than 30 people drafted into the NHL, has become a premier launching pad for

several young players, which shows just how tough games are going to be, Hastings said.

"With the talent in our league I think it shows continued growth and respect from those who make decisions on who plays hockey in the NHL," he said.

"The USHL used to be a well-kept secret, but the word's getting out."

Lampman said he hopes to be in the next group that makes the jump to the pros. Always level-headed, he knows that getting an education comes first.

Fortunately for him, with scholarship offers from several big-name colleges, he won't have to worry about how he's going to pay for school, where he plans on majoring in sports psychology.

He's also humble enough to know that the NHL might not come calling. In that case he said wants to be involved in hockey in any way possible.

"I'd like to be in coaching," he said. "I just want to be affiliated with the game."

The quiet kid from Rochester has come a long way from the days of getting knocked around the ice by the bigger kids. Now he is one of those bigger kids. If he's looking to exact some revenge on his older brother, he knows he'll have to wait for awhile since his older brother will graduate before he gets to college.

But that doesn't mean it won't happen eventually, Bryce Lampman said.

"Someday I hope to play against him," he said, "but it'd be trouble if we did." nsa

Home away from Home

by Michael Watkins

Chris Fournier chases his dream of playing professional hockey as he begins his fourth and final year with the USHL's Lincoln Stars. When he's finished, he will leave as the all-time leading scorer in the club's five-year history – in fact, he already is.

Photo by Eric Francis

If you're Chris Fournier, Nebraska's prairies and majestic fields of tall-standing corn don't hold a candle to the snow-capped mountain ranges and scenic ponds nestled among stark tree limbs of Alaska, where he was born and raised.

Nonetheless, it wasn't these flatlands or cornfields that lured the talented athlete four years ago from Anchorage to play for the Lincoln Stars.

It was hockey, along with the dream of one day playing professionally in the United States or Europe.

"I've always loved the game, ever since I started playing as a kid on the ice rink my dad and neighbor built in our backyard," said Fournier, who graduated from Lincoln Southeast in May and is taking a year off before starting his college career.

"I love the pace of the game, the roar of the crowd, the excitement of scoring a goal or helping a teammate score with a pass. I know that only 1 percent of college players play professionally, but for me, there's no better feeling in any other sport."

With 53 goals under his belt, Fournier's experienced those feelings many times during his three years with the Stars – and he has one more year to stake his claim as one of the premier players in the United States Hockey League before making a decision about college.

But his current situation is one based on years of practicing, competing, improving and growing to love and appreciate the game – all the while reaching past his physical limitations (5-foot-8 and 170 pounds) and excelling.

"Scouts told me that I was too small to play in the USHL or beyond that," Chris said. "In hockey, because it's such a physically demanding sport, bigger, quicker, faster is the standard. I intend to prove there are exceptions to that rule."

In the beginning, there was TV

Fournier got an early start to the game that would lead him out of the Alaska home of his parents and into the strange surroundings of his host family, Kim and Kelly Brown and their two boys, in Nebraska's capital city.

His first exposure was watching a game on television – a vision that continues to impact and change his life.

"I was 5 years old, and I saw a game on TV, probably the Edmonton Oilers, and I told my mom I wanted to play," said Fournier, the Stars' all-time leading scorer with 155 points. "Mom went out and bought me the gear to play, and I've loved it ever since. I've played other sports –

"I like the physicality of playing defense, guarding my home goal, but seizing the opportunity and shooting the puck into the goal or to a teammate on the break is the most exciting part of the game to me."

Photo by Eric Francis

basketball, golf, baseball – but hockey is my true love."

Considering his practice and game schedule while attending Lincoln Southeast, Fournier admits he had to make a commitment to hockey in order to make it from one day to the next.

School for Fournier and several other teammates still in high school began at 7:30 a.m. and went until 12:30 p.m. Practice ran from 1:30 until 5 p.m., then homework and other chores. On game nights, he wouldn't get to bed until after midnight — and that's not even counting games on the road.

With a season that starts in September and ends just before the finish of the school year in May, Stars hockey becomes a full-time commitment.

"That's equal, if not more, than a full schedule in the NHL and those guys aren't going to school at the same time," said Fournier, whose younger brother, Mike, also plays for the Stars. "It takes a lot of time, a lot of dedication. You have to love it or you're going to get burned out pretty quickly."

Speed on the Outside

As a wingman – a player on the outer edges of the rink who sees the full field of play – both offense and defense bear equal weight.

"I defense inside the blue line, but on offense, I'm one of the guys who makes passes to other players or takes the shot," Fournier said. "I like the physicality of playing defense, guarding my home goal, but seizing the opportunity and shooting the puck into the goal or to a teammate on the break is the most exciting part of the game to me."

Home Sweet Home

Fournier admits that playing in the Icebox, the Stars home rink, which seats 5,500 and sells out annually, is a far cry from the desolate beauty of his backyard rink.

But when he moves on to the next level, he said he'll always remember how much he felt at home in Nebraska.

"It's funny when you think that there are no high school hockey teams in Nebraska, but the state has two USHL teams and a huge following," said Chris, of the Stars and the Omaha Lancers. "In a state where Husker football is everything, I would have never guessed me and some other guys on a frozen sheet of ice would be so well-received. My time here will always be very special to me, no matter where I am." nsa

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YOUR LOCAL DODGE DEALERS PRESENT

cover story

All By Himself

Keyuo Craver thrives on the solitude that comes with being Nebraska's man on the hotseat

by Samuel McKewon photos by Eric Francis & Bob Berry

Ernest Hemingway once said, "No man is an island."

And yet here is Nebraska cornerback Keyuo Craver, alone on the practice field just south of Memorial Stadium, the last man to leave, surrounded by the football gear he's just peeled off.

He's pulling himself in a bunch of directions, like he's not sure what he wants to cover next. He gallops his way over to the makeshift trainer's table to cut the tape from his feet. He signs an autograph for a young member of linebacker Mark Vedral's extended family. He gallops back over to his gear, throws on some shoes, when he's presented with the interview request.

"I gotta do it right now?" Craver said. "Cause I gotta get something from that girl."

Craver swivels his head and throws a casual nod toward a blonde-haired, long-legged runner, presumably a Nebraska track athlete, doing leg extensions across the field on the new Nebraska track. Craver gallops over to the girl – walking doesn't seem to be his particular style – when they talk for five, maybe 10 minutes before galloping together over to the girl's bag, propped up against the old bleachers.

There, she pulls out a pen, rips some paper and starts to write. Craver got exactly what he wanted. He gallops back over.

"Sorry about that," Craver said. "I'm just a flirt."

Flirting is the nature of the cornerback, the position considered one of the most difficult on the field for its physical and pressure-oriented demands. You look for moves, signs, tendencies and opening, a way to get their digits, the equivalent of knowing where they're going before they even start going there and, preferably, getting there before they do, but not too much before, lest the receiver improvise, break his route off somewhere else, burn you for the big one, which, because every fan is watching, will not be pretty.

Craver, a junior forced to assume to position of top cornerback after Ralph Brown graduated, has to thrust the calculations through his head. A receiver will do this when he goes to the inside. When he wants to juke you gone, he'll try this. Maybe, if he's a guy like Kansas State's Quincy Morgan, he'll put one move on you, and let his speed do the rest. Maybe, if he was former All-American Texas receiver Kwame Cavil, he'll try to muscle you, because he's bigger and receivers got ego; they think they can do just about anything to bust up a cornerback.

And in a zone coverage, where the safety takes on the role of tag-team partner, you're still a mile away from the rest of the game – linemen, quarterback – Even though, at most, it's only 20 yards, it might as well be on a different field. The cornerback and his twin island, the receiver, do a dance for 70 plays, a pigskin courtship of tiny shoves, feet entanglements, cheap thumb presses into the throat.

In the course of those 70 plays, maybe 10 will genuinely matter. And a receiver need only win a handful of those to win, period. The mountain of pressure builds to the point of overwhelming.

"When I was first on the 'scene' out there was against Alabama-Birmingham," Craver said, "and all I remember is just looking at the crowd, stomach getting all queasy and being out there all by myself."

"I was like 'Oh my God' I'm gonna screw up. There's gonna be a big play. The worst feeling of my life."

The receiver (Craver doesn't remember his name) ran a go route. Craver stayed "step for step." The play started, it ended, the world returned to order, the sun set in the west. Craver's first play was an official success.

But he had learn to shove the noise, the whirring and cracking of a vendor, the warbling "Go Big Red!" of some boy, to the tips of his ears. Craver, from small Harleton, Texas, knew nothing of the thousands who pile into Memorial Stadium each Saturday, much less a stadium of nasty opposing fans.

"We used to have 2,000 at our games," said Craver, the small-town Texas wonder, a do-everything player who also rushed for 3,024 yards and 50 touchdowns in one season. "To go from 2,000 to 80,000 was something I had no idea about. I had a tough time getting used to it. I was hearing people screaming; I was getting more into the crowd than the receiver."

But Craver, like most good cornerbacks, possessed a natural athleticism that soared above and beyond most regular players. He had the requisite speed, but Craver's special talent is his leaping ability, as he's competed in the triple jump, a sprint and leap of pain accented by three unyielding steps of pressure, for Nebraska's track team the past years.

"We've had a lot of guys come

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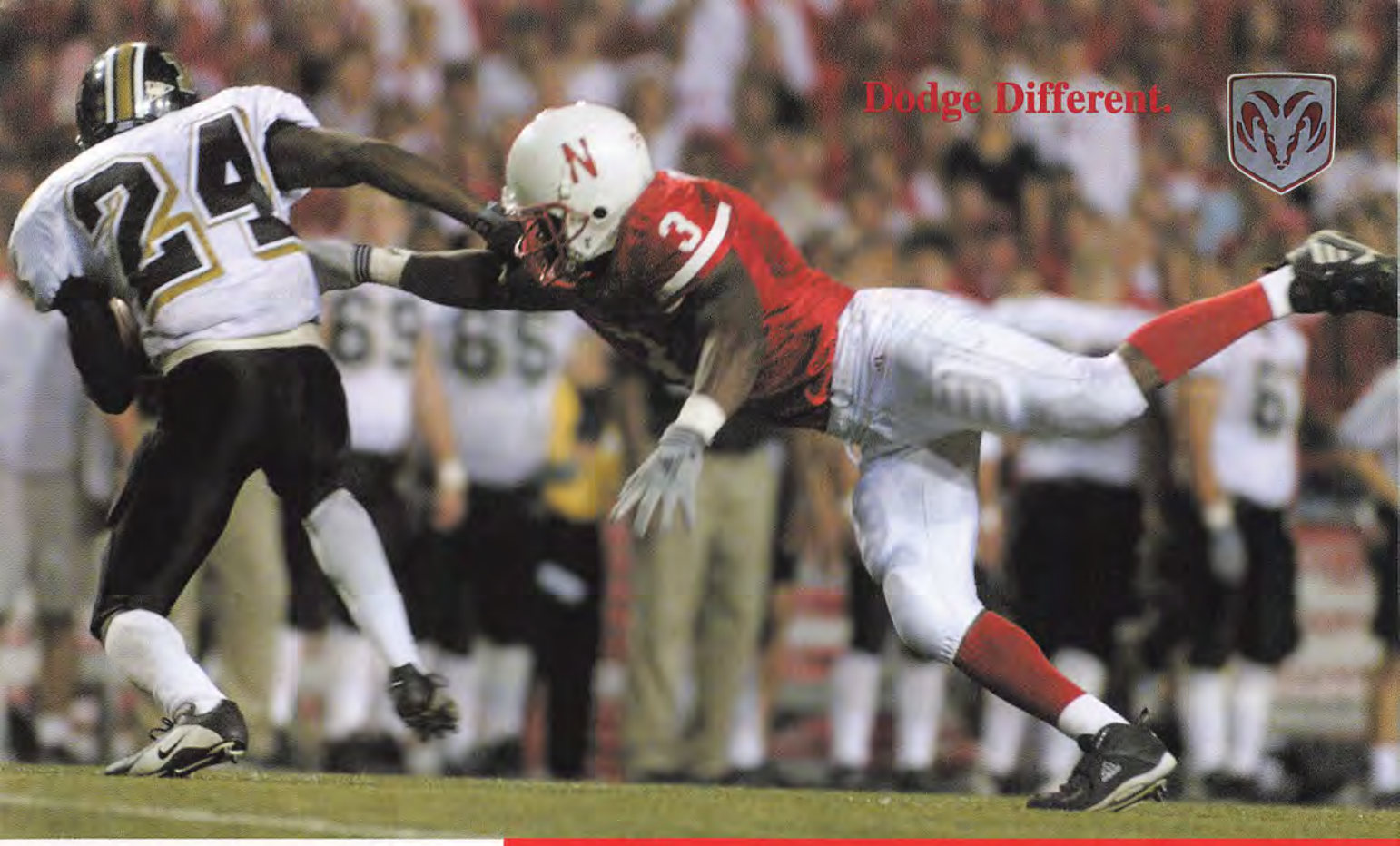

through the program that were great athletes, and Keyuo is one of those guys," Husker secondary coach George Darlington said.

Athleticism and instinct, then, got Craver on the field as a freshman, as often can happen in the Husker system, which emphasizes that a Nebraska cornerback be able to carry the pressure of frequent man-to-man coverage on his jersey week-to-week. It's also a position that sees enough applicants fall out of the picture to validate its difficulty.

Cornerback is about details, the littlest ones. Inches count. Head fakes count. What does not count, what does not even matter in the slightest, is much of anything going on in the trenches, nor in the stands, nor even the fellow cornerbacks on the other side of the field.

"You learn to block out all the people around you," Craver said. "The people around you, they're a blur. I can honestly say I do not see the linemen. Whenever I'm up on a receiver, I don't see anybody."

Craver likes the "being up" nose-to-nose with a receiver, his 5-foot-10, 190-pound a centipede's space apart from his targets. Unlike some cornerbacks, who prefer to muscle the small receivers to the ground, Craver likes them big, as to get into their chest.

"I'd actually say cornerback is the hardest position," Craver said. "You make a mistake, it's usually a big one, it's 40 yards or a touchdown. That's a whole lot of pressure to deal with."

The world doesn't just blur, it slows down, especially if Craver can see the ball aloft, floating in his direction. There was some expectation that, like Brown last season, Craver, as the anointed top cover man in the secondary, wouldn't see as many passes thrown his way than last year, when quarterbacks avoided Brown to zero in on a sophomore.

So far, Craver said, that hasn't been the case. Time slows down just as often in 2000 as it did in 1999.

"It gets up there in the air, and everything just so slow to me," Craver said. "No sound, nothing at all, until the play is over with."

Except his own breath, the metronome by which Craver takes each step against a cornerback. Unlike a sprinter, who can time out those breaths over the course of a track, or even a triple jumper, Craver's breaths, like his feet, move differently according to route and receiver.

"The breathing is deep, man," Craver said. "I can't even describe it. You've gotta be there. It's hard to explain. It's hard to get used to. Now it's just me and the receiver."

Craver turned to the Browns, both Ralph and Mike, the rover by which most future Nebraska rovers will be measured. Their advice and continued experience help pave the way for a better understanding of the mental side of playing the position.

Nebraska's team psychologist, Dr. Jack Stark, often prepares CDs for players in learning how to focus.

Beyond that, Craver had to learn what accomplished stage actors often call "improvising knowledge," which is to know a scene – in this case a receiver - so well that the recognition of one of move triggers a response, and if and when they change their routine, the cornerback can change with it.

"For however long a play lasts, you have to be on your receiver the whole time," Craver said. "You don't

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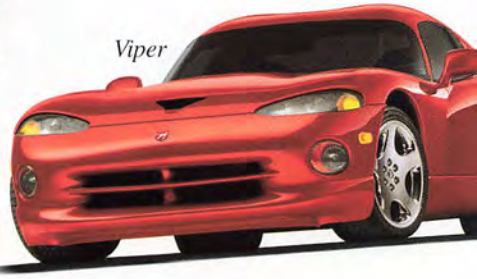

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have any time to think. It's not a process where you're gonna go 'Well, here's what I'm thinking.' It's a process where you just got to react. You gotta know what you're going to do before you do it."

Craver took his knocks early in freshman year of 1998, before having a breakout in the biggest Husker loss of that season - the 40-30 Kansas State victory. Craver was nearly magnificent all day, with six tackles, an interception (only KSU quarterback Michael Bishop's second of that season) two pass breakups and a quarterback hurry.

Craver covered Darnell McDonald several times that day, one of the toughest assignments with which he's dealt.

Tough assignments seem to suit Craver best. Nine months later, when Nebraska's psyche was battered and bruised, Craver helped rescue the Huskers from possible defeat against Southern Mississippi with two interceptions in the fourth quarter, both of them critical in a 20-13 victory. That day, Craver was armed with having to cover two eventual pro receivers, Sherrod Gideon and Todd Pinkston. To his interception count he added a career-best four pass breakups.

The rest of the 1999 season, save a less-than-perfect performance against Texas in a 24-20 loss, was littered with praise for Craver, who made up for the Texas loss with what he considers his best game, which came in the UT rematch of the Big 12 Championship game.

It matched Craver with Texas' receivers, some of the best in the nation, and,
with then Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride's strategy to blitz Longhorns' quarterback Major Applewhite relentlessly with seven or eight Huskers, it left Craver on that island alone, in the somewhat hostile atmosphere of the Alamodome.

"I was up against Kwame Cavil a couple of times, Ryan Nunez (Montrell) Flowers, the whole shebang of them," Craver said. "All I remember is them catching one pass on me — it was like four-yard slant pass — and that's all they got on me.

It was that game, and a subsequent solid performance in the Fiesta Bowl win over Tennessee, that make Craver a significant prospect for the NFL, as his slightly bigger size makes him a better catch than Ralph Brown might have been. In recent years, Husker defensive backs have matched the offensive line player for player in sending talent to professional football. The latest success story was the Kansas City Chiefs' Eric Warfield.

Another Husker success, Nebraska volunteer assistant Brian Washington, a former NFL all-pro with the New York Jets and Chiefs, said Craver "definitely has the potential." Darlington said Craver's physical style appeals to scouts.

Physicality appeals to Craver, too, part of why he chose Nebraska rather early in his senior season of 1997, well before Tom Osborne announced his retirement in December.

"I knew all Nebraska did was play in-your-face, man-to-man, bump-and-run, let you do your thing," Craver said. "You can't really point fingers when it's just you and a receiver. If he catches it on you, it's just your own fault, can't really blame that on anybody. I just like showing them what I can do."

It doesn't always work. Against guys like Morgan, whose one-step-and-take-off style makes him one of the nation's most dangerous weapons, a physical push can backfire, assuming he gets past you.

Expend a lot of energy, and Craver risks the debacle that happened in Colorado last season, where three quarters of strong performance nearly got erased when CU came back with more than 200 yards in the fourth quarter alone.

Every game turns itself into a 60-minute experiment of sorts, where trial-and-error is a must, but can occur in disastrous results. There's nothing tougher in the game of football, Craver figures, except the quarterback.

Wait a minute. He wants that answer scratched out.

"I'd actually say cornerback is the hardest position," Craver said. "You make a mistake, it's usually a big one, it's 40 yards or a touchdown. That's a whole lot of pressure to deal with."

For Craver, being on the island isn't just a survival of fittest, but the smartest, the quickest, the fastest, the most audacious and the most busy.

Being a flirt, then can be a very good thing. nsa

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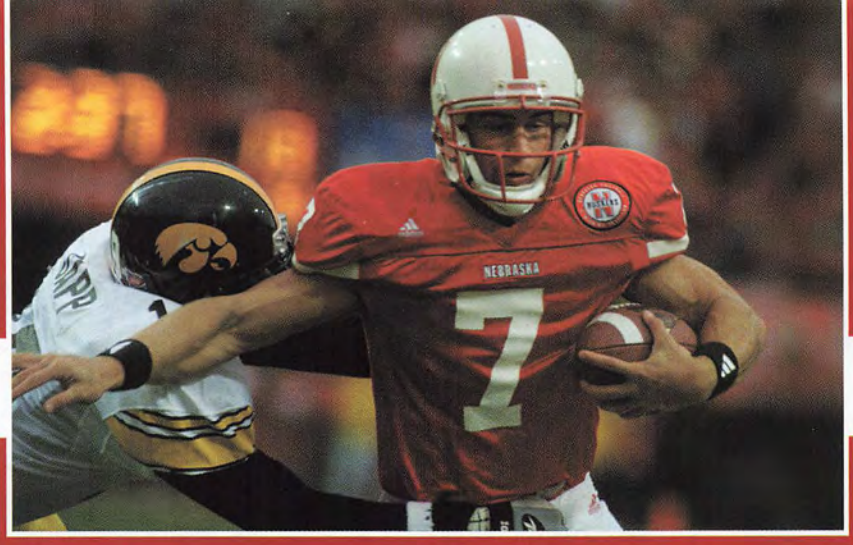
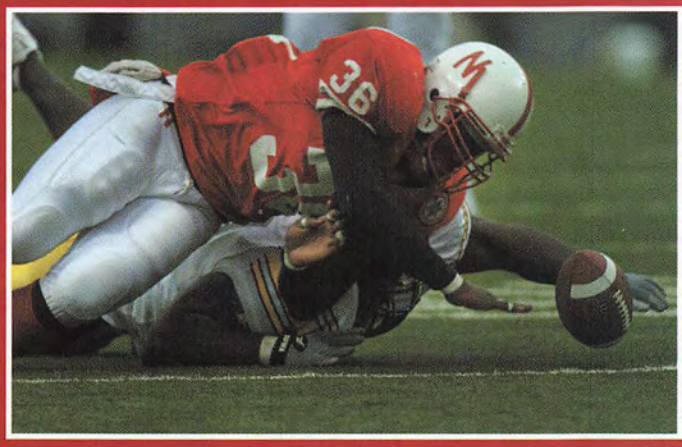
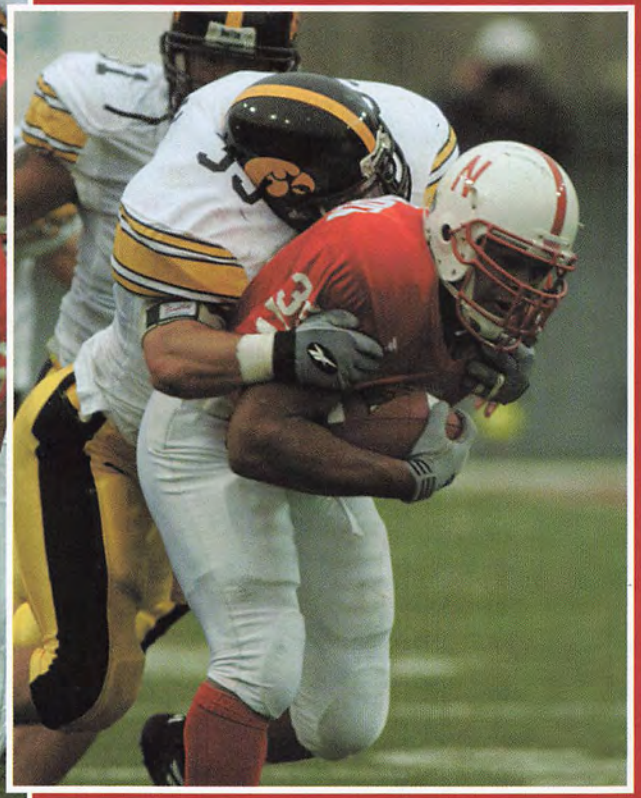
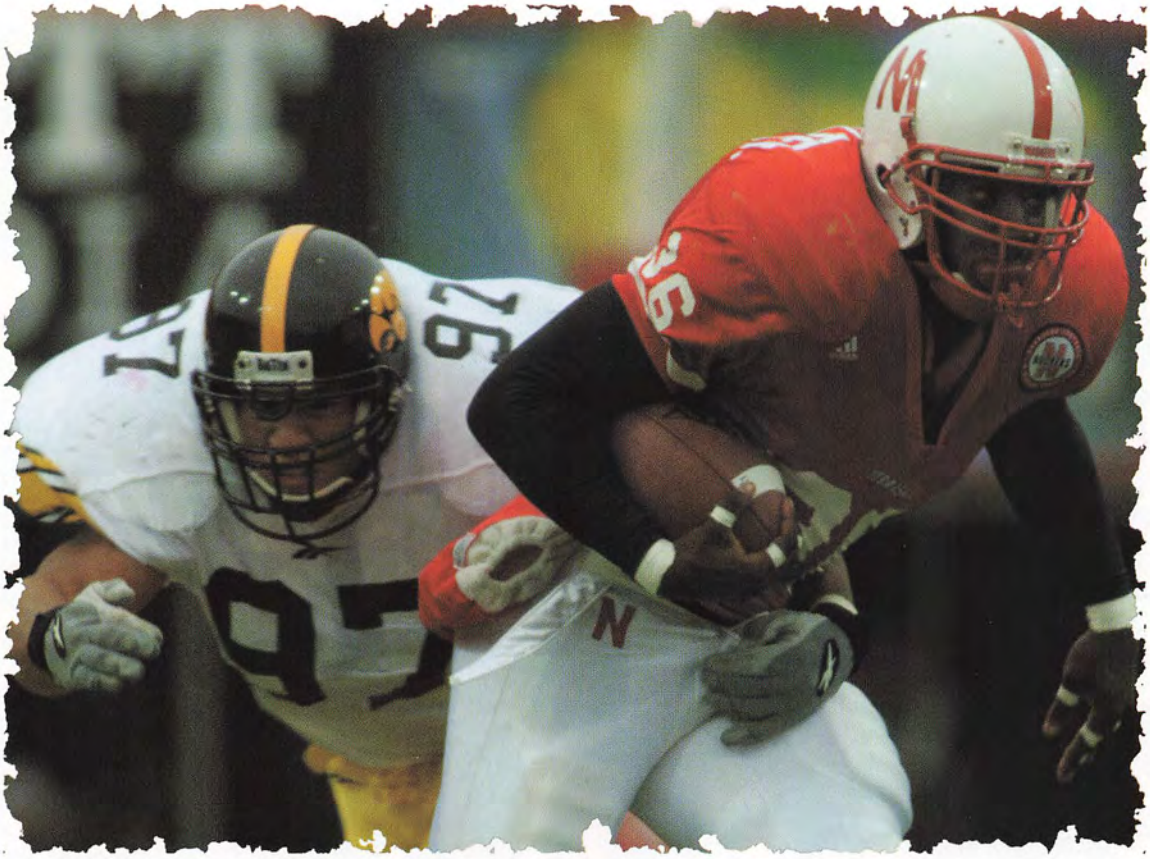


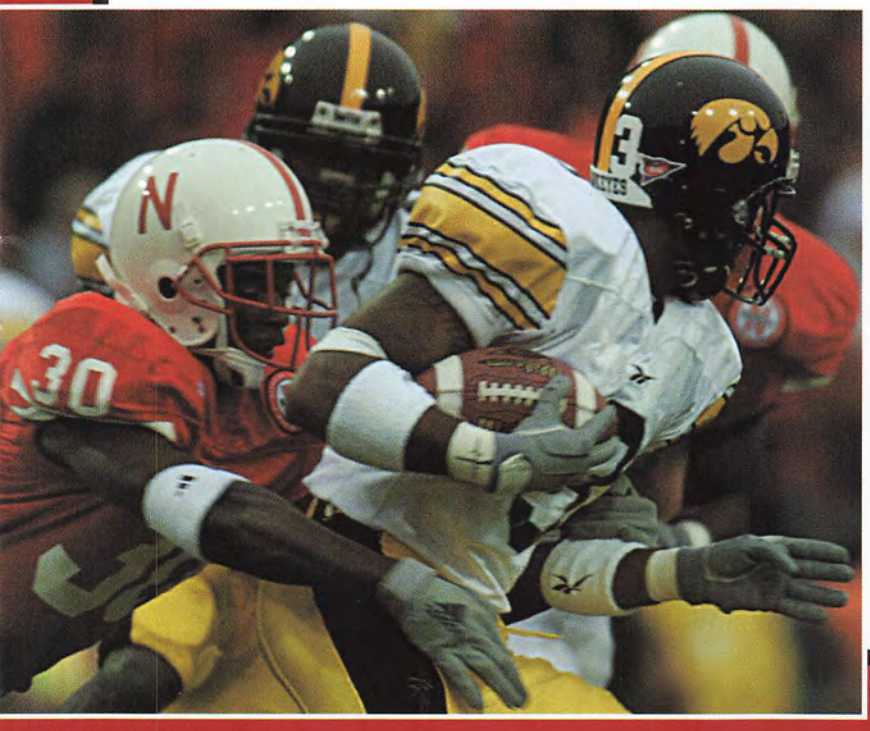
Scoreboard

Nebraska	**42**
Iowa	**13**

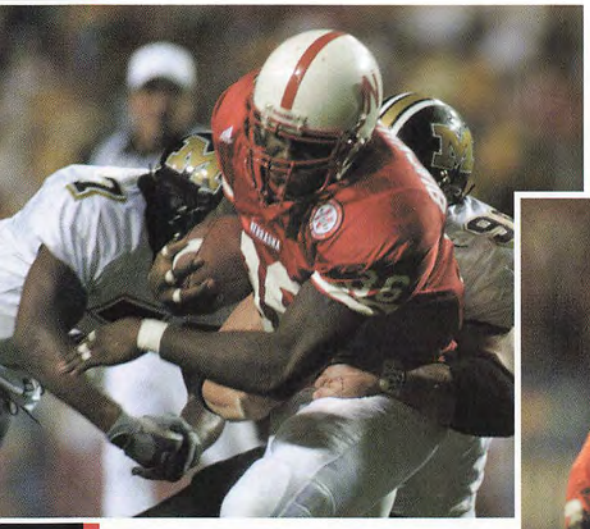








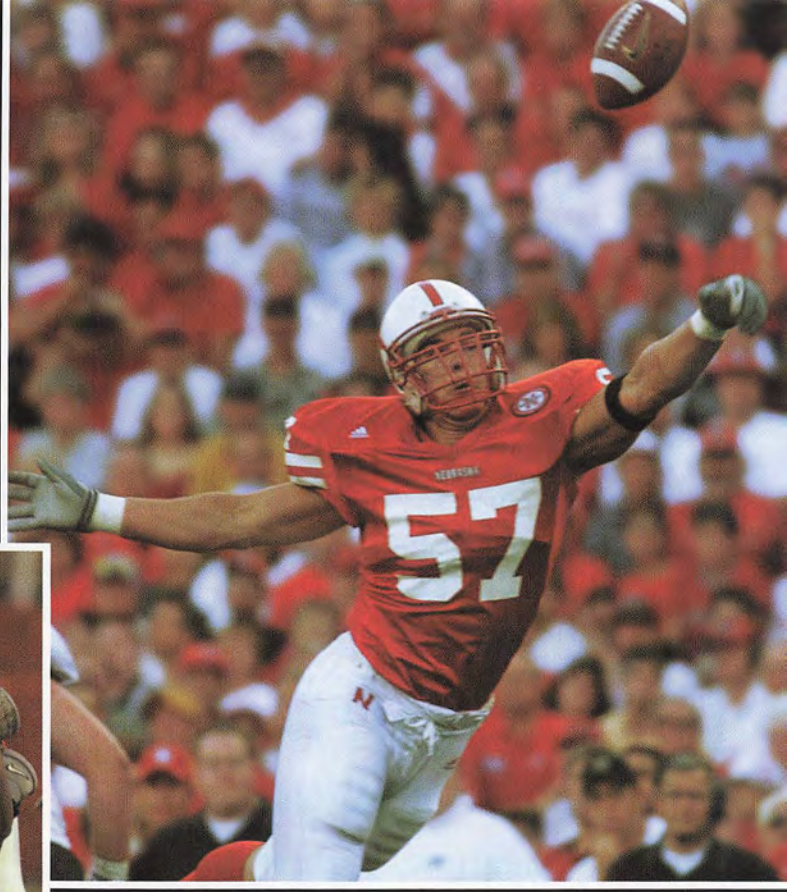
Photos by Eric Francis



Photos by Eric Francis

Scoreboard

Nebraska	**42**
Missouri	**24**



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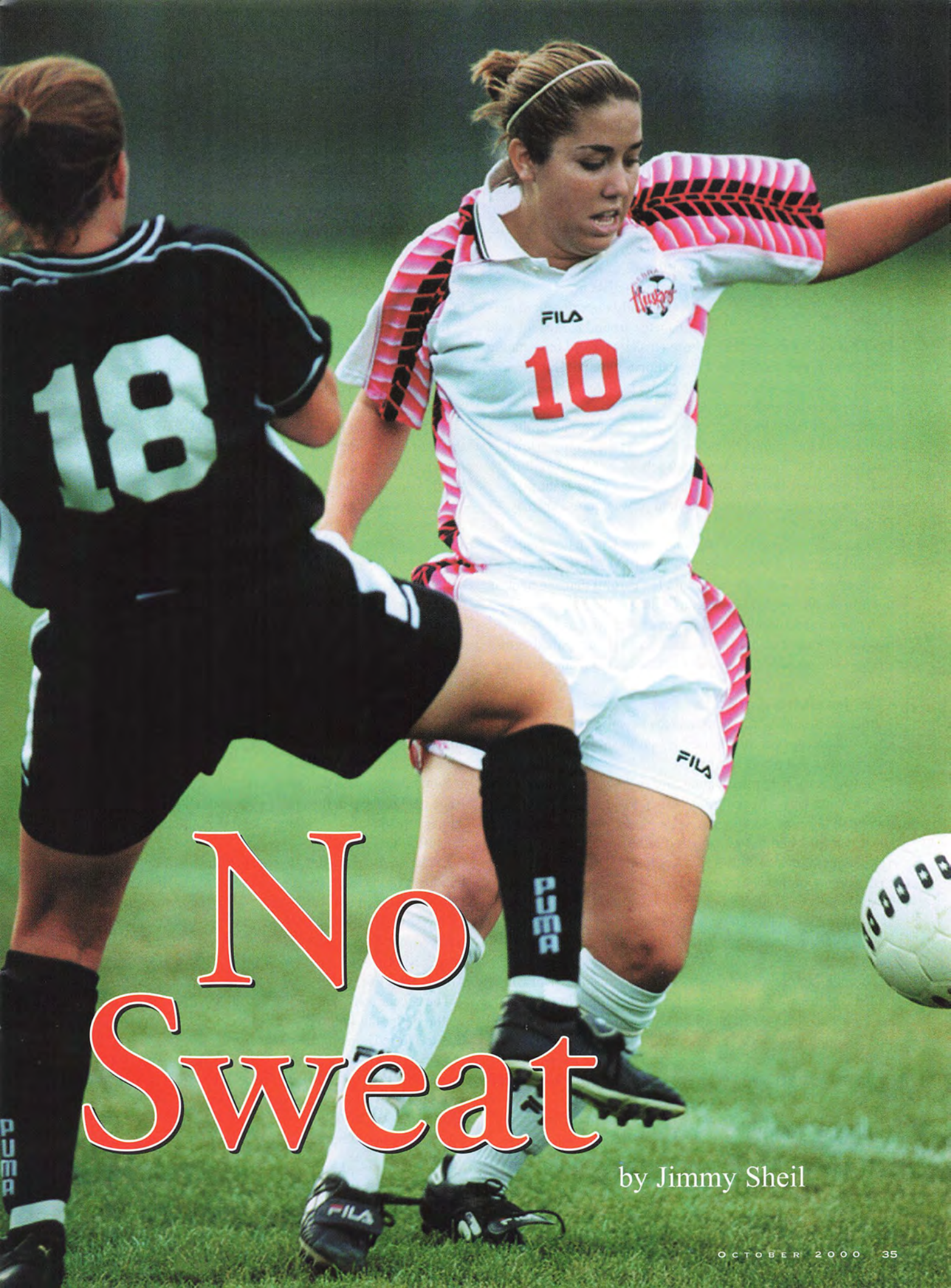


No Sweat

by Jimmy Sheil

Kelly Rheem doesn't let life's distractions slow her down on the soccer field

With a soccer ball in-tow, Nebraska forward Kelly Rheem can dribble circles around a gnat. Surprisingly, the 5-foot-3 junior has ankle-breaking moves without blazing speed.

The Big 12 Conference leader in assists also is diabetic.

"Kelly really doesn't talk about her diabetes around the team," said Husker Coach John Walker, whose Huskers moved through the early season undefeated for a top national ranking. But the Husker coach has a better handle of the Littleton, Colo., native's attention-grabbing soccer skills.

"She is a tremendous play-maker and dribbler, one of the very best in the country," Walker said. "At the Orange Bowl Tournament her junior year in high school, her ball-handling and moves were just incredible, she had the other team just twisting and turning all over the field. It was quite a display of skill."

Especially considering Rheem has Type 1 Diabetes that requires vigilant daily monitoring. The 1999 All-Big 12 Conference Second-Team pick said her careful management of the disease has helped her keep it in check.

When coerced to talk about it, the advertising major downplays it making it sound like nothing more than a pulled hamstring. Until she adds, "Basically with diabetes, your pancreas just stops working."

Oh, you mean that vital organ thing.

Rheem's troubles with her pancreas began when she was 9 years old and her parents noticed a significant weight loss among other disturbing symptoms.

"It was scary being that young, losing 15 pounds quickly and not knowing why," Rheem said. "Also, I was hungry and thirsty all the time, so they did a test on my blood. My blood sugar was 800, and it was supposed to be around 150."

If having to deal with the physical ramifications of the disease weren't enough, Rheem said, the quandary of being treated differently in grade school every day took its toll. Try explaining to the class clown in fourth grade why you get snacks every afternoon and have to leave class every day to get shots.

Through high school, the shots and daily management continued and the treatment became part of her life. Now the shots are gone and she uses an insulin pump, which is attached to her side and monitors blood sugar levels.

However, sometimes during a game she will need some orange juice to get her blood sugar level up. But that is the only way Rheem will say how the disease affects her.

The Arapahoe High School graduate's experience growing up dealing with the disease and her peers left enough of an impression on her to help whenever she can with diabetes-related events.

"I volunteered in high school at the Barbara Davis Center for Childhood Diabetes to work with kids like I was growing up," Rheem said. "And I spoke in front of 500 people to juvenile diabetes foundation in Lincoln and told my story about growing up with diabetes and playing soccer."

Not only playing the game but the diminutive Rheem has excelled in the sport. As a freshman in 1998, she was third on the Cornhuskers in points and was named to Soccer Buzz's Central Region All-Freshman Team scoring. As a sophomore on the Big 12 champion Huskers, she was third on the team in goals to go along with First Team Academic All-Big 12 honors.

In 2000, she is a cog on a national championship contender. On the all-time Husker charts, she stands fifth on the Husker assist list with 27 and eighth on the goals list with 22.

As good as those numbers are, they could be better, Sophomore forward Christine Latham said.

"Typically, Kelly will beat two or three players and do all the hard work," Latham said. "Then she will lay a ball to me or Becky (Preston) to shoot. If she was more aggressive that would complete the circle."

Walker's words on Rheem were more measured.

"She needs to shoot the ball more, get a shooters mentality," Walker said. "But she has been such a natural with her dribbling skills since a young age, it's easier said than done.

"And she doesn't have excellent speed but she has the rare ability to make moves and dribble at her top speed. Some speedy players you put a ball in front of them and it just doesn't translate."

Rheem said she would like to take her game to a higher level, but she knows a possible professional league is out of her control. She believes for a league to form, people's ideas on women's soccer will have to change. Rheem thinks one misconception is people don't realize how hard-hitting and physical a soccer match can be.

Some people who do know how physical soccer can be are Rheem's buddies on the Husker baseball team who see home games at Abbott Sports Complex on the northeast edge of Lincoln, she said.

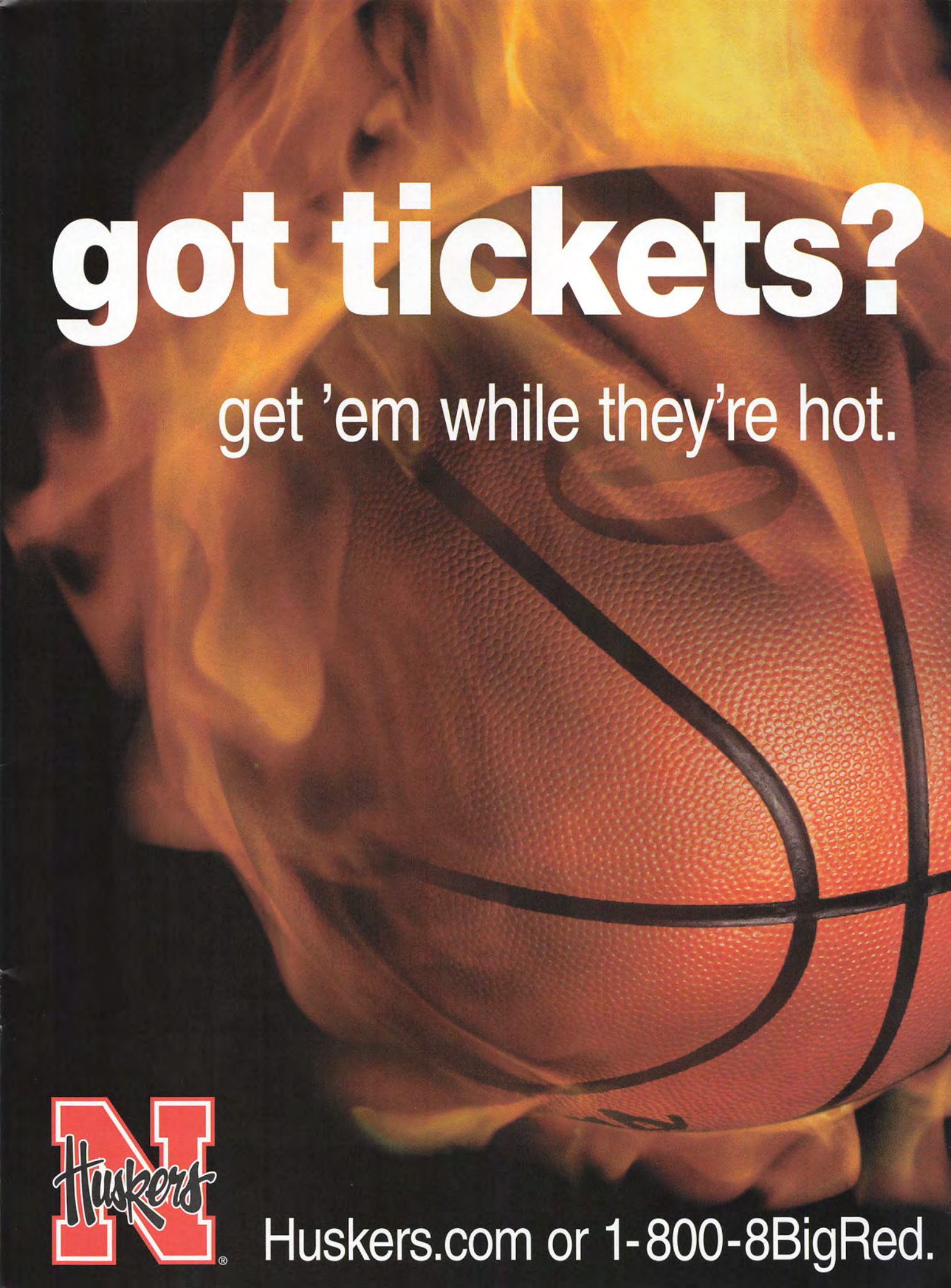
Likewise, Rheem and other soccer players followed the baseball team in the 2000 NCAA Tournament to Palo Alto, Calif., last June where they stood one game away from being the first University of Nebraska team to make the College World Series.

"We went to Palo Alto for the NCAA's with the baseball team," Rheem said.
"When they lost, we were crying more than they were."

The soccer team had their own bitter NCAA loss last year with a piggy-tail pulling, sudden-death penalty kick shootout loss to Notre Dame in the quarterfinals, 4-3.

"We try not to dwell on the Notre Dame game, but it's impossible to forget," Rheem said. "We were a great team last year and were so close in the tournament. We're just as good this year, and I think we could go all the way."

And that would make the quiet Rheem just chatty. NS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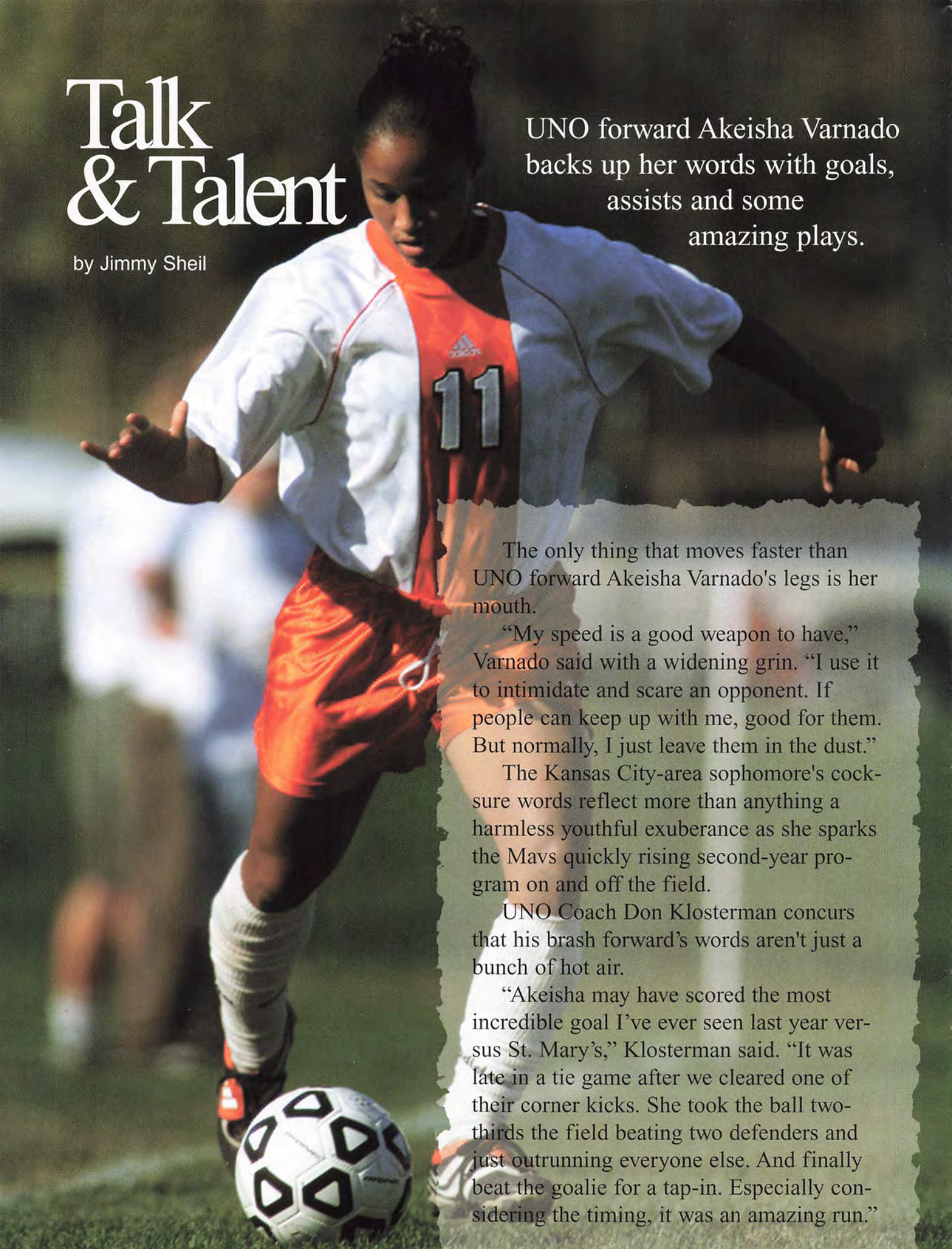
Talk & Talent

UNO forward Akeisha Varnado backs up her words with goals, assists and some amazing plays.

by Jimmy Sheil



The only thing that moves faster than UNO forward Akeisha Varnado's legs is her mouth.

"My speed is a good weapon to have," Varnado said with a widening grin. "I use it to intimidate and scare an opponent. If people can keep up with me, good for them. But normally, I just leave them in the dust."

The Kansas City-area sophomore's cocksure words reflect more than anything a harmless youthful exuberance as she sparks the Mavs quickly rising second-year program on and off the field.

UNO Coach Don Klosterman concurs that his brash forward's words aren't just a bunch of hot air.

"Akeisha may have scored the most incredible goal I've ever seen last year versus St. Mary's," Klosterman said. "It was late in a tie game after we cleared one of their corner kicks. She took the ball two-thirds the field beating two defenders and just outrunning everyone else. And finally beat the goalie for a tap-in. Especially considering the timing, it was an amazing run."

Women's Soccer

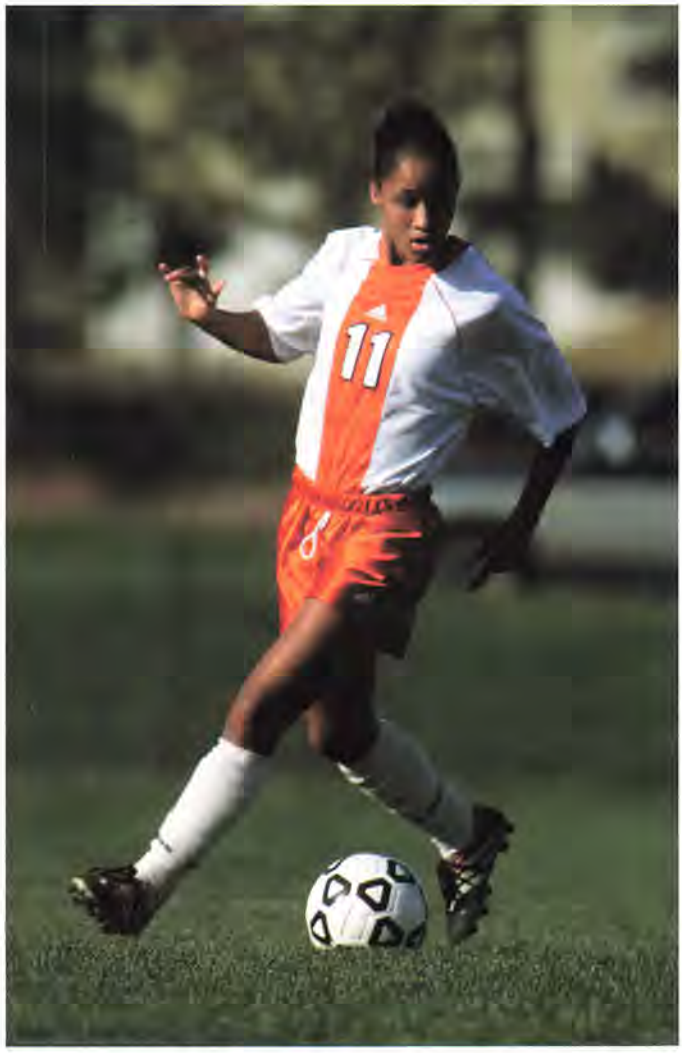
Varnado made many runs in 1999 leading UNO in assists and was second on the team in goals. Although limited by injury this season, Varnado still ranks among UNO's leaders in scoring and assists.

The win over St. Mary's was an important victory for a first-year team for respectability and confidence. UNO went on to post a surprising 14-5 record and place third in the North Central Conference with a 5-2 record, finishing behind nationally ranked Northern Colorado and North Dakota State.

The year, however, started a little more predictable for the rookie program.

In August of 1999, the green Mavs struggled through two-a-days had an exhibition with nationally ranked Nebraska. The Mavs were bombarded 14-0 in a soccer bloodletting. To people outside the program it may have appeared the only positive for UNO was that the game ended, but Klosterman wanted his players to see what it took to play at that level and build on the experience.

Build they did as they lost to Creighton 3-0 in the season-opener before notching the first win in school history in its second game at Southern Illinois Edwardsville 2-1.



Varnado assessed improvement of the Mavericks using the two Creighton games as a barometer.

"Last year after the Huskers, we weren't so intimidated by Creighton, another DI school, but we could have played better," Varnado said. "But this year we were ready for Creighton. I think we are their equals and we weren't intimidated by them."

The Jays won the exhibition 4-3 in August.

The continued Mav improvement hit a snag earlier this season when Varnado had to sit for two weeks with multiple stress fractures in her shin, and Klosterman noticed "contagious" energy was missing. The team went into an offensive slump without her in the lineup.

Upon her return to their home field on what used to be Aksarben's race track, the Mavs found the net eight times in two games. UNO was glad to have Varnado back.

"Akeisha brings a lot of fire and intensity to the field," UNO midfielder Jodi Mollner said. "And a lot of speed to the offensive attack. When she came back from her injury, the team played totally differently because she was taking people on, beating everybody and passing the ball. She is just a total spark."

That energy is something Varnado uses before games in introductions as she does a little jig before racing onto the field. Klosterman will allow the self-expression only to an extent.

"Before the season-opening game in Joplin, they announced her name and she did her little dance. But she ended with one of these (the coach does a pelvic thrust). We weren't too thrilled with that, and we stopped it before we got home," Klosterman said with a laugh.

Not only on the field Varnado will stand out but around UNO's campus she will raise some eyebrows with her four-inch platform shoes and outfits that some might say were in the drying machine too long. However, Varnado said she is just a girl who wants to have fun.

"Today on campus," Varnado said giggling. "I had these jeans on and this little white shirt with the Playboy Bunny symbol … It's just kind of fun and goofy, and I don't take it really seriously."

Mollner was mum on Varnado's campus gear.

"What does Akeisha wear on campus? Oh, God, no comment," the senior captain said laughing. "No, actually we tease her a lot and she's so cute in her little outfits. That's just Akeisha."

Varnado did have a comment on what the Mavs need to do to unseat Northern Colorado as NCC champions in 2000.

"We need to finish around the goal more," Varnado said. "We are getting a lot of shots on goal, but we need to finish shots. And finish games stronger also." nsa

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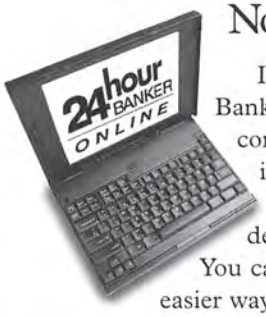

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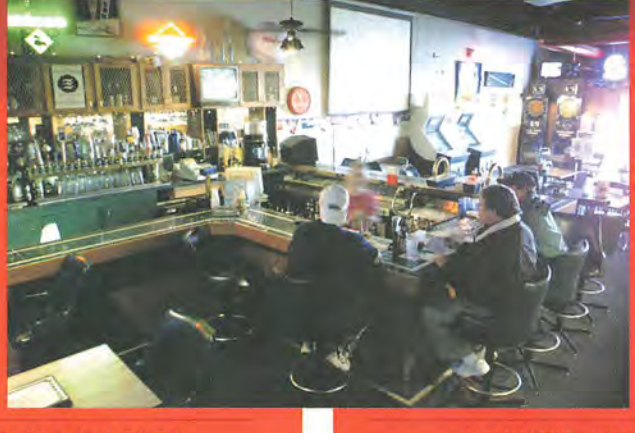

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In the Thick of Things

On the field or off, Creighton keeper does things her way

by Jimmy Sheil

Creighton keeper Jaimie Thompson may be a bit hokie, and the freshman's elevation over a starting senior may have ruffled a few Bluejay feathers. But, the St. Louis native's emergence has rejuvenated the slow-starting Jays.

"Jaimie is great at organizing the defense, just communicating what she sees to the other defenders and that makes the players around her better," second-year CU Coach Bruce Erickson said. "She's young, but we didn't want to hold her back if she can help us out right away. She won the Weber State game for us."

The 4-2 win over Weber State in September was crucial as the Jays had a 1-4 record coming into that game with their only win versus hapless Northern Iowa, 10-1. Since then, the Jays and Thompson are in a better groove, winning as many as they have lost. Thompson has recorded two of the highest save totals in CU history with a record-tying 16 versus BYU in early September and 13 versus Nebraska later that month in which Erickson called Thompson "unbelievable."

In a MVC win versus the Drury Panthers from Missouri on Sept. 29, she showed the communication skills Erickson talked about.

In the second half of a 1-1 tie at the Bluejay's home field at Tranquility Park, Thompson was doing more than just stopping shots. She was barking to her sweeper and midfielders to get them in position or to tell them where the pressure was coming from to keep Drury at bay.

The Jays went on to beat the Panthers in overtime, and Thompson has a handle on the responsibilities of her position. "Sometimes the best games by a keeper are when she doesn't touch the ball at all but keeps the group together through vocalization and organization," Thompson said.

Keeping Thompson's nerves together is a constant strug-

gle, but she has certain rituals to help settle her down until the first shot. Thompson has some nearly normal superstitions, like not stepping on lines when going to the goalie box and putting the right shoes and socks on before the left ones.

The habits turn a little strange with using the same rubber bands in her hair for a game and putting a Band-Aid beneath shin guard – even though there's no cut to protect. Thompson even holds her roommate Julie Meiners' hand as they walk to her position before each game. Then the teammates clap hands and say, "Let's win and have a shutout."

The idiosyncrasies extend off the field as well.

"Our room is crazy, we have to have the matching things on each side of the room," Meiners said. "We have the same bedspreads, curtains, towels and drawers."

Something else that is not normal is a freshman coming to a team and being a leader, Erickson said.

"Typically you don't see freshman come in and lead," said the former collegiate keeper who earned NLCCA All-American Viterbo College in Wisconsin in 1986. "Sometimes a freshman can make an impact but not necessarily lead. However, the keeper position demands it if you are going to be successful."

For every feel-good story of a freshman emerging, there is someone relegated to the bench, especially at such a unique position as keeper. In CU's case, it's a three-year starter, the Missouri Valley leader in career minutes for keepers and a 1998 all-MVC honorable mention pick in Maggie Phelan. She admits struggling to balance team goals with being a senior and trying to savor a successful career.

"I felt I was having a good year, maybe better than last," Phelan said slowly about the demotion. "But coach felt Jaimie organized the team better.

As a player I'm super disappointed, but it's out of my control. I'll help Jaimie out as much as I can, and I'll keep myself ready to go."

Considering the only way Phelan was going to get in the game versus Western Illinois in early October was if the hot Thompson took a direct kick to the head, it was ironic that the second loudest person, after Thompson, was the senior Phelan. From the bench, where sometimes in team sports it can be a mutinous atmosphere, she was shouting encouragement and being the first up to smack subs coming in and out of the game on the back.

Some of those other young subs shuffling in and out were budding freshman midfielder Meiners, who scored her first goal versus Western Illinois, and Bellevue East graduate Franny Hylok, who scored the game-winner in overtime versus Drury. The ex-Chieftain juked two defenders before beating the goal with a rocket to the upper right corner. Freshman forwards Lulu Quigley and Lindsey Martinson have started regularly in 2000. Also, emerging is midfielder Carrie Randall, who made her first start versus Western Illinois, after playing substantial minutes throughout the season.

Randall raved about the tightness of the team and that Erickson is concerned with getting the players on the field who give CU the best chance to win. Recent success has CU thinking the unthinkable: the school's first NCAA tournament in 2000.

Erickson said that is an attainable goal despite the rough start, and considering the team's defensive-oriented performance in defeat versus the highly ranked Huskers, it might just be bottoms up for the Jays at year's end.

"We definitely gave Nebraska a run for their money and they are a great team," Thompson said. "Some of the things they said on the field weren't too sportsmanlike, but they were frustrated." nsa

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In the stands

WITH TERRY L. HENION

Down, but not out

There are some who probably thought a devastating knee injury last season would slow down Nebraska sophomore Stephanie Jones.

Think again.

Jones, the highly touted 6-foot-2 forward from Omaha Benson, began fall basketball drills this month with the same all-out drive as always. That means pedal to the metal, warp speed perpetual motion. And perhaps more important, her knee appears sound again, after months of rehabilitation.

She tore the anterior cruciate ligament in the seventh game last season while careening off the court in pursuit of a loose ball against Creighton.

"You know, the funny thing about that is my dad (Butch) wasn't there, and it was the first game that I have ever played that he wasn't able to attend. He had to be out of town on business, " Jones said. "He felt almost as bad as I did."

Surgeons successfully repaired the knee damage and operated on some nagging ankle ligament damage as well. They told Jones it would be at least five months before she could expect to set sneakers on the court again.

"I listened to them, but I was in the weight room at 6 the next morning,"

Jones said. "I might not have been able to run or walk, but I could work on my arm strength. And I had a ball with me, too, just to keep in touch."

Jones was among the most highly recruited players in the country two years ago. National champ Connecticut was among the most ardent suitors. But Jones opted to stay home and play for the Huskers where new coach Paul Sanderford was trumpeting his intentions to make the Big Red a player on the national women's hoop scene.

In her brief freshman season, Jones showed flashes of what she will bring to the Huskers. She rebounded, took charges, dived for loose balls, collected floor burns and generally created havoc for the opposition. She averaged 5.6 points and 3.4 rebounds last season, but that hardly indicates her value to the team.

When the Huskers run sprints, Jones is the leader. In the weight room, it is Jones who sets the pace. On the floor, there is no such thing as a "walk through" for the Husker sophomore.

Sanderford tells his players that he rates every movement they make on a scale of 1 to 10. For example, he might say to a player, "You gave me a 5 on that sprint and I expect at least an 8 or a 9." For Jones, Sanderford uses a different scale.

"He is always having to tell me to slow down," she said, laughing. "He will say, 'Steph, you are giving me a 13 when I all I want is an 8.' I don't know what it will be like for awhile now. I mean, I have so much energy built up after last year, you know?"

Sanderford has talked to his energetic sophomore about other things, too.

He wants – no, make that expects – her to be a focal point for the team.

"Coach told me that he wants me to lead by example," she said.

And so, Jones will take her rebuilt knee and her rekindled attitude into the 2000 season, one in which the Huskers are not expected to make much noise in the Big 12 Conference race. Most observers think Nebraska will finish somewhere in the middle of the pack. Jones said that she and the other members of the team have other plans.

"I want our program to get to the point where Texas Tech or Iowa State is," she said. "I want people to point at us and say, 'Hey, they have a heck of a team in Lincoln.'

I want to see 10,000 fans at all of our home games.

Those are things we all want. To do that, we have to win. To win, we have to work hard."

Hard work is an elixir to Jones. She needs it as much as she requires air to breathe. That is why her knee injury and the forced idleness that goes with rehabilitation has now revved her motor to the point of overheating.

"I didn't realize just how much I missed it," Jones said. "It was the hardest thing I've ever done, to sit there every day and watch my teammates busting their buns and me not being able to be out there."

She is not trying to make up for lost time now, though. Jones figures her time is ahead.

Now, if Sanderford can just get her to gear down a bit…

"I told him that I would try," she said, laughing. "But once I get out there, I only know one way to play and that is full speed, all of the time."

Other coaches only wish they had that kind of problem player. nsa

Terry Henion is a longtime sportswriter who has worked for the Omaha World-Herald and Hastings Tribune.

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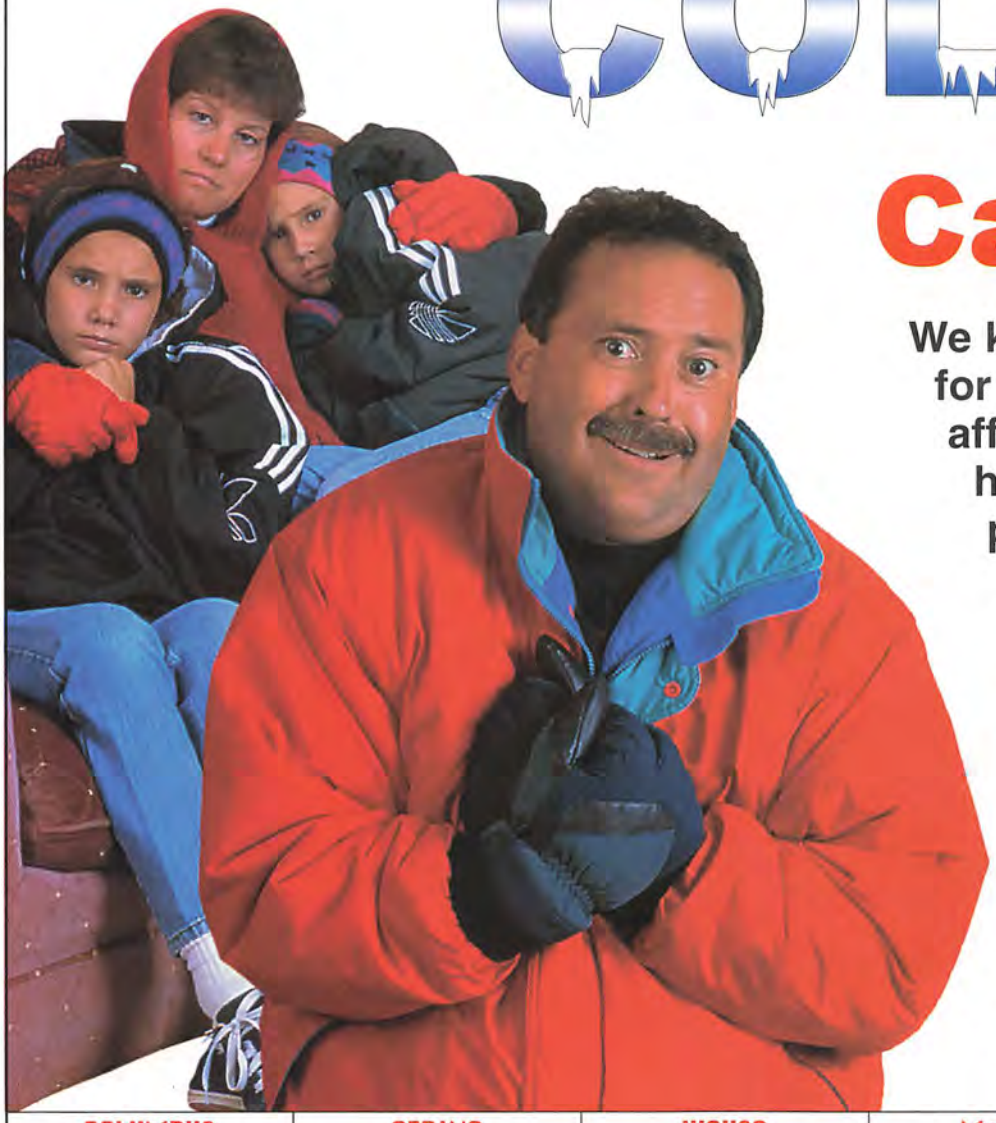

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